MEMORIES OF EIGHT PARLIAMENTS

HENRY W. LUCY
("TOBY M.P.")

Memories of Eight Parliaments

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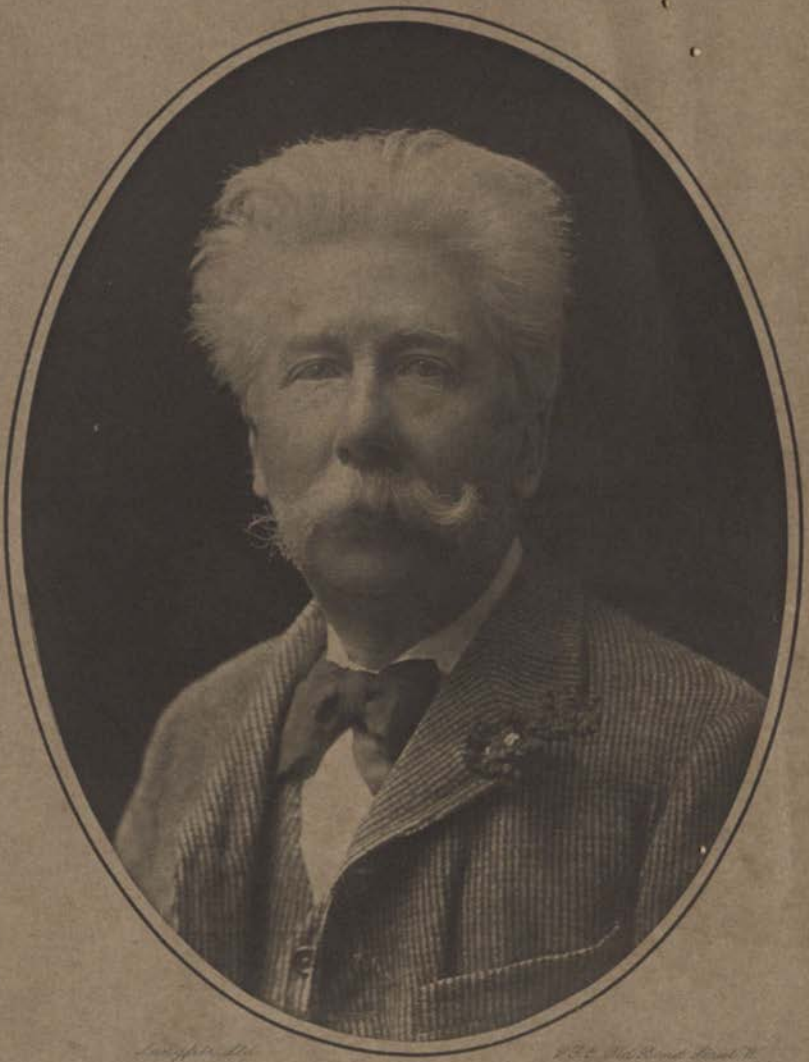

Henry W. Lucy

MEMORIES
OF
EIGHT PARLIAMENTS

Part I.—MEN ; Part II.—MANNERS

By

Henry W. Lucy

(*WITH PORTRAIT*),

"*On anything relating to Parliament Mr. Lucy speaks as an expert. There is, perhaps, no man living who has had so constant and so close observation of Parliamentary life in its many aspects.*"—Lord Rosebery at Epsom, December 13, 1899.

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TO

THE LORD CHANCELLOR

(LORD LOREBURN)

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED, IN MEMORY OF

OLD FRIENDSHIP AND

A MUTUAL FRIEND.

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CHAPTER I.

PRIME MINISTERS I HAVE KNOWN.

(1) MR. GLADSTONE.

Dec. 1868—Jan. 1874. April, 1880—Nov. 1885.
Jan. 1886—June, 1886. Aug. 1892—March, 1894.

It was in the Session of 1873 that I first knew Gladstone. He was then Prime Minister, Leader of the House of Commons, throned in 1868 by an overwhelming majority. Five years had sped, and the life of the once buoyant House was running to the lees. The Premier in his sixty-fourth year was still hale and vigorous, with more than twenty years' work in him, including a momentous measure that shivered the Liberal Party to atoms. But the House of Commons was worn out, fretful with the querulousness of age. Already the master of legions had suffered defeat by a coalition between extreme Liberals and ultra Tories. The Irish University Bill was thrown out by a narrow majority of three. Disraeli declining to take office, the Liberal Ministry forged ahead, but in troubled water that momentarily threatened shipwreck. The Premier was not assisted by the personal popularity of some of his colleagues, including Mr. Ayrton and Mr. Lowe. The Session flickered out amidst constant wrangling and increasing disregard for authority. Gladstone's home policy pleased not the people, nor was his foreign policy more popular. Buffeted abroad, assailed from

within, angry, dispirited with existing circumstances, yet with constitutionally sanguine nature hopeful of the verdict of the nation if appealed to, he, in January, 1874, on the very eve of the reassembling of Parliament, dissolved it.

There was current at the time a malicious report to the effect that some of his Cabinet colleagues learned of the dissolution of Parliament when on the 24th of January, 1874, opening their morning papers they found displayed on the front page the Premier's letter to the electorate of Greenwich, informing them that he had advised Her Majesty to sanction the step. Though the story seemed improbable, it was not impossible. In such a matter decision rests absolutely with the Prime Minister, though he would naturally prize counsel taken with his colleagues on so critical an issue. That the bomb should be exploded in the breakfast-room of Cabinet Ministers seemed a procedure lacking in courtesy, not to speak of wisdom. But underlying his habit of effusive speech there was a curious secretiveness about Gladstone. His colleagues in the Cabinet of 1885 had reason to suspect him of Home Rule tendencies long before his momentous decision was made known to them.

However, in the matter of the dissolution of 1874 the Premier was guiltless of the discourtesy attributed to him. In Mr. Morley's "Life," Gladstone's diary of the 18th January, 1874, is quoted. "This day," it is written, "I thought of dissolution. Told Bright of it in the evening. At dinner told Granville and Wolverton. All seemed to approve. My first thought of it was an escape from a difficulty. I soon saw on reflection that it was the best thing in itself." Five days later, at a full meeting of the Cabinet Council, dissolution was

discussed and approved, and the next morning there flashed over an astonished land the prodigious thunderbolt of the address to the electors of Greenwich whose proportions vexed the soul of Disraeli. Writing to the Queen immediately after the Cabinet had dispersed, the Premier reported that "large portions and the most important portions of Mr. Gladstone's address were read to and considered by the Cabinet, and it was in some respects amended at the suggestion of his esteemed colleagues."

An instance, better substantiated, of this tendency to burrow underground was at the time apparently of personal bearing. It had far-reaching consequences, not alone on the destinies of Gladstone, but on the fate of the Liberal Party and the current of Imperial events. When in 1882 Mr. Forster resigned office as Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Chamberlain was prepared to succeed him. At that time he, in company with Sir Charles Dilke, was far in advance of Gladstone or any other member of the Cabinet in the direction of Home Rule. He was in intimate correspondence with the Irish members who were disposed to accept his assistance in freeing Ireland from coercion and administering the affairs of the country more in accordance with national aspirations.

One of the most prominent and influential of the Irish Members told me of an interview Mr. Chamberlain had with him immediately after the news of the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish shocked the country. He was anxious to know what measure of support he might expect to receive from the Nationalists if he undertook the office of Chief Secretary. The Irish Member asked whether it had been offered to him by the Premier. Mr. Chamberlain made no definite reply, but smiled with

assurance accepted as meaning that if he would take it it was his. A few days later announcement was made that Mr. George Trevelyan was going to the Irish Office. How Mr. Chamberlain heard the news, whether in cordial communication from the Premier, or through what are called the ordinary channels of information, I do not know. But the rebuff and the manner of dealing it were unforgetable, and were not forgiven. Had Mr. Chamberlain's aspirations of the moment been realised, he would have been committed by Ministerial action in Ireland that would have made it difficult for him to wreck the Home Rule Bill in 1886. Nor would there have been the incentive to pay off old scores.

Heavily defeated at the poll in 1874, Gladstone came back six years later on a flood of popular enthusiasm exceeding even that which floated him into office in 1868. Not since the palmiest days of Peel had a Premier stood in so supreme a position of power. With a majority of 117 over the Conservatives, of 56 over a possible combination of Conservatives and Parnellites, he was apparently in impregnable position. But the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Before the Premier took his seat on the Treasury Bench after re-election on accepting office, the process of disintegration had commenced. Mr. Bradlaugh, the Radical Member for Northampton, was the beginning of the end of a Ministry supported by this stupendous majority. Had Gladstone chanced to be in his place when the Bradlaugh difficulty first manifested itself, all might have been well. When Mr. Bradlaugh presented himself at the table with demand to affirm instead of taking the oath, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, was the principal

Minister on the Treasury Bench. Sir Henry Wolff was the first to see the opening here presented of harassing the Government. Presently he was joined by Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Gorst, thus creating the famed Fourth Party. When Gladstone appeared on the scene schism in the Ministerial ranks had begun to work, and there was speedily established a state of things in which the Leader of the House, deserted by his followers, abrogated his functions, Sir Stafford Northcote, as Leader of the Opposition, moving resolutions hostile to Mr. Bradlaugh whenever that energetic gentleman romped on to the boards.

In the long record of a busy, sometimes tumultuous life, unprejudiced history will probably regard Gladstone's attitude on the Bradlaugh question as the finest episode. For a man of his devotional habits, his strong and abiding faith in the living God, there must have been something repulsive in the attitude of standing shoulder to shoulder with an avowed atheist. It chanced, as the House of Commons later formally recognised, Mr. Bradlaugh had truth and justice on his side. For truth and justice Gladstone was always ready to fight against any odds. "I have no fear of atheism in this House," he said in a concluding passage of a speech on the Bill designed to close the controversy. "Truth is the expression of the Divine Mind, and however little our feeble vision may be able to discern the means by which God provides for its preservation, we may leave the matter in His hands, sure that a firm and courageous application of every principle of equity and justice is the best method we can adopt for the preservation and influence of truth."

Faced by an incensed and unscrupulous opposition, weakened by desertion from his own ranks, uncomfortable

in the contiguity of the man in whom he for the moment found the representative of justice and right, Gladstone rose to the fullest height of his matchless powers. For loftiness of tone, for beauty of diction, for persuasiveness of argument, his speech on the second reading of the Affirmation Bill, brought in in 1883, stands in the front rank of the long procession of majestic orations.

I well remember the intense excitement with which Gladstone awaited the results of this crowning effort. Had it been his first critical division on which all his political prospects depended, he could not have been more deeply moved. It was half-past one in the morning, after a debate extending over a fortnight. Lord Kensington, the Whip who had been assisting in telling the Ministerial forces, was the first to arrive at the table, a circumstance which to old practitioners augured defeat. Having fewer to count he would be finished first. The clerk stood motionless at the table, waiting for the tellers for the "Noes" to bring in their record. The Premier sat on the Treasury Bench, with both hands nervously grasping a blotting pad on which, from force of habit, he had placed a sheet of notepaper intending to write his nightly letter to the Queen. His colleagues near him, making the best of a bad job, effusively affected rather to enjoy the prospect of being defeated. They laughed and chatted as if it was quite a joke for the strongest Ministry of modern times to fail in effort to carry an important Bill. Only the Premier, his knees closely drawn together, his hands nervously clutching the blotting pad, watched with flushed face and anxious eyes the excited crowd opposite. He seemed to be counting the numbers still slowly passing by the narrow gangway between the table and

the Front Opposition Bench. Having heard the figures announced, 289 for his Bill, 292 against, he, instantly subsiding from a state of tension, went on writing as if nothing momentous had happened.

This was a manner he was wont to display under varying circumstances. Seated on the Treasury Bench during controversial debate he occasionally betrayed uncontrollable irritation. He could barely restrain himself from leaping to his feet and emptying the vials of his wrath upon the Member who had heated them. The moment he stood at the table he resumed command of himself and in flawless language, almost without gestures, demolished the adversary. I recall over the space of thirty-five years a scene that took place in the Commons. It was a Wednesday afternoon, towards the close of the Parliament of 1868, the business before the House being the third reading of Mr. Forster's Education Bill. The House was weary of the long controversy. Even Gladstone's stupendous appetite seemed satiated. Mr. Miall, representative of the Nonconformist conscience, alarmed by suspected tendencies on the part of Mr. Forster towards denominational teaching, was making fresh moan.

"Nonconformists," he said, "cannot stand this sort of thing much longer."

The Premier, seated listless on the Treasury Bench, raised his head with gesture of sudden anger. It was as if the lion slumbering in its lair heard the approach of the enemy. When Mr. Miall sat down he sprang to his feet. Thunder rolled and lightning flashed.

"I hope," he said, in those deep, slowly-spoken tones that with him marked the white heat of passion, "my honourable friend will not continue his support of the Government one moment longer than he deems

consistent with his sense of duty and right. For God's sake, Sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause he has at heart that he should do so."

Another outburst, this time not without touch of the ludicrous, happened in Committee on the first of a long series of Irish Land Bills. He had been at his post day after day, sitting far into the night. Even on his magnificent physique the strain began to tell. To the consequent irritation was added the vexation of an amendment to his treasured Bill moved from the Ministerial benches. It was, of course, eagerly supported by the Opposition, and the House cleared for a division. In such circumstances further debate is prohibited. If a Member has any point of order to raise in connection with a division he may do so. But in accordance with quaint etiquette, the origin of which no man knoweth, he must whilst he speaks keep his seat and put on his hat.

After a moment's eager conversation with Sir Farrar Herschell, then Solicitor-General, Gladstone stood at the table with evident intention of making a speech. For a moment Members sat silent in breathless dismay. Such unparalleled breach of order would be bad enough in a new Member. In the Leader of the House it was a sign of madness. There uprose from the Opposition savage shouts of "Order, order!" The shocked Chairman of Committees bobbed up and down making remarks that were inaudible in the uproar. The Conservatives (in a Parliamentary sense, of course), cut themselves with knives. Their ancient enemy had destroyed the Irish Church, was even now engaged in deliverance of Irish land. These things they had struggled against in vain. But as long as Heaven left them voices he should

not stand at the table of the House of Commons and address the Chairman of Committees when the House had been cleared for a division.

"Put on your hat," the Ministerialists cried.

Gladstone, by this time pulled back into his seat, shrewdly shook his head. The old campaigner was not going to give himself away. The fact was that, in accordance with custom, he had left his hat in his private room. When the situation was mastered, the air in the neighbourhood of the Treasury Bench was darkened by hats proffered by loyal Ministerialists. The Solicitor-General, being closest at hand, came to the rescue. Taking off his hat he placed it on the Premier's head.

That was all very well. You may take a horse to the river but you can't make him drink. Similarly you may put your hat on another man's head but it is not bound to fit. Gladstone's head was abnormally large, necessitating supply from specially made blocks. The Solicitor-General's hat was at least a size and a half too small. Gladstone, having recovered his equanimity, dexterously dodged it on his brow and gods and men looked on amazed whilst he addressed the Commons of England, for the more perfect balancing of a borrowed hat seating himself on the extreme edge of the Treasury Bench.

This is a passing incident. It reveals in a flash of light the extraordinary complexity of this marvellous character. It is safe to say that no Prime Minister before or after was discovered in such undignified position. Yet in the ordinary relations of public or private life dignity was a striking and prevalent characteristic of Gladstone's manner. To see him walk up the floor of the House after a division was an education in deportment. As he crossed the Bar, coming into full sight of

the Members, he instinctively squared his shoulders, threw back his head, advancing with quick but stately steps.

He was by no means studious about the style or modernity of his clothes. He cherished a grey frock-coat suit, returned to with regularity when the summer solstice was entered upon. A generation of budding statesmen grew up with that suit, growing familiar with every crease and fold. During one of the Midlothian campaigns, when he was a guest at Dalmeny, he daily wore an ancient, short-cut, much frayed cape, of the kind Shem, Ham and Japhet might have worn when they took their walks abroad before the Flood necessitated the Ark. It was compact, of a cheap, shoddy material called, I believe, vicuna. It was in vogue, among other monstrosities of fashion, in early Victorian days. This was probably the only specimen left in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Even it could not debase or disguise the native majesty of Gladstone's presence. What he looked like when appropriately dressed was realised by the multitude present at the opening of the Law Courts in the Strand. At that time he held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and came to wait upon his Sovereign in the stately robe pertaining to his office.

Habitually careless of what he wore so that it were loose and comfortable, fond wifely eyes looked after his appearance on special field nights. When he came down prepared to deliver one of his epoch-making speeches he was dressed all in his best, generally with a flower in his coat, which suffered much in his wrestling with prejudice and lack of intelligence on the benches opposite. On one occasion whilst expounding a Budget, the attention of Members, who are after all a pack of schoolboys, was

distracted by a difficulty with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's floral decoration. It was spiral in shape, and a little too tall, so that as the orator in fine frenzy turned to survey the audience on his left-hand side, the point lightly touched his cheek. He thought it was a fly, and his frantic efforts to catch it on recurrence of the accident led to indecorous but subdued laughter.

Save in its loftiest heights Gladstone's Parliamentary manner lacked repose. He was always brimming over with energy which were much better reserved for worthier objects than those that sometimes succeeded in evoking its lavish expenditure. I once followed him through the hours of an eventful sitting and jotted down notes of his manifold gyrations. A transcript of them may convey some faint impression of his manner in the House. It should be premised that the date was towards the conclusion of his second Administration, when once more, as in 1873, things were going wrong. The foe opposite was increasing in persistence of attack, whilst nominal friends on the benches near him were growing weary in their allegiance and lukewarm in their attachment. The Premier came in from behind the Speaker's chair with hurried pace. He had been detained in Downing Street up to the last moment by important despatches on a critical matter then engrossing public attention.

Striding swiftly past his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, he dropped into the seat kept vacant for him, and hastily taking up a copy of the Orders, ascertained what particular question in the long list had been reached. Then, turning with a sudden bound of his whole body to the right, he entered into animated conversation with a colleague, his pale face working with excitement, his eyes glistening, and his right hand vehemently beating

the open palm of his left as if he were literally pulverising an adversary. Tossing himself back with equally rapid gesture, he lay passive for the space of eighty seconds. With another swift movement of the body, he turned to the colleague on the left, dashed his hand into his breast pocket as if he had suddenly become conscious of a live coal secreted there, pulled out a letter, opened it with violent flick of extended forefingers, and earnestly discoursed thereon.

Rising presently to answer a question addressed to him as First Lord of the Treasury, he instantly changed his whole bearing. His full, rich voice was attuned to conversational tone. The intense, eager restlessness of manner had disappeared. He spoke with exceeding deliberation, and with no other gesture than a slight outward waving of the right hand, and a courteous bending of the body in recognition of his interlocutor. The mere change of position, the literal feeling of his feet, seemed, as was usually the case, to have steadied him, re-endowed him with full self-possession. Often in angry debate one has seen him bounding about on the seat, apparently in uncontrollable rage, loudly ejaculating contradiction, violently shaking his head, and tendering other evidence of lost temper, hailed with hilarious laughter and cheers from honourable gentlemen opposite. Finally springing to his feet with a fierce bound, he has stood at the table motionless and rigid, whilst the House was filled with the tumult of cheers, the roar of hostile clamour. When the Speaker authorised his interruption it seemed as if the devil of unrest were thereby literally cast out. He suddenly became himself again, and in quiet voice set forth in admirably chosen language a weighty objection.

On the night to which my notes refer the debate was

resumed by Lord Randolph Churchill, who, then seated below the gangway, irresponsible and irrepressible, had an hour's perfect enjoyment. Standing below the gangway, with eye watchfully fixed on the mobile figure stretched out in the seat of the Leader of the House, he pricked and goaded him as the sprightly matador in the arena girds at the infuriate bull which, if it were only intelligently to expend its force, could tear the human mite into unrecognisable shreds. At first the Premier assumed an attitude of ordinary attention, with his legs crossed, hands folded so that they caressed either elbow. He threw back his head and closed his eyes, the light from the roof falling on a perfectly placid countenance. As Lord Randolph went on with quip and crank, audacious accusation and reckless misrepresentation of fact or argument, he lifted his head, shuffled his feet, crossed and recrossed his hands, and fixed an angry eye on the delighted tormentor. The potion was beginning to work, and jeering cries from Conservatives above the gangway or howls from the Irish camp, at the gates of which Lord Randolph's standard was at that time planted, added to its efficacy.

Soon Gladstone began to shake his head with increased violence as Lord Randolph repeated a statement thus contradicted. Louder grew the irritating cheers from the Opposition. The triumphant whisper went round, "Randolph's drawing him!" Excited by the tumult, and vainly trying to lift his still mighty voice above the uproar, Gladstone, seating himself perilously near the edge of the seat, bending forward and grasping himself somewhere below the knee, leant across towards the more-than-ever-delighted adversary and angrily reiterated "No, no, no!" A pitiful and undignified demonstration on the part of a Prime

Minister, which was exactly what Lord Randolph was endeavouring to bring about.

When Lord Randolph had made an end of speaking, Gladstone sprang up with catapultic celerity. For a moment he held on to the box on the table at arm's length, drawing himself up to fullest height with a genial smile on his countenance that completed the contrast with his late perturbed manner. Once more he was himself, his supremacy of the House, lost through the lamentable exhibition just witnessed, instantly reassumed with his self-command. Now was witnessed the exhibition of that skill which Mr. Lecky noted in Pitt. Like Pitt—as far as opportunity is provided to the present generation to judge, infinitely beyond Pitt—"no one knows better how to turn and retort arguments, to seize in a moment on a weak point or an unguarded phrase." In half a dozen sentences of exquisitely modulated speech Gladstone, displaying the benevolence with which Gulliver was able to refrain from resenting the pricking of the lance of Lilliput's doughtiest champion, played with Lord Randolph, and finally tossing him aside, turned his attention, as he said, to more serious matters.

This was all very well to begin with. But warming with his work, the Premier proceeded through a series of gymnastic exercises which would have left an ordinary man of half his years pale and breathless. Watching him as he brought down his strong right hand with resounding blows upon the Blue Book from which he had just quoted, newcomers to the House understood the fervency with which Disraeli once thanked God that the table intervened between him and his life-long rival. So vigorous were the thumps that it was with difficulty the words they were intended to emphasise

could be caught. The famous pomatum pot, which played a prominent part on these occasions, had an exceedingly bad time. Gladstone's eye falling upon it as he fiercely gyrated, he seized it with sudden gesture, brought it to his lips with swift movement, and devoured a portion of its contents as if, instead of being an innocent compound of egg and wine, it were concentrated essence of Lord Randolph Churchill conveniently prepared with a view to his final disappearance from the scene. Sometimes with both hands raised rigid above his head; often with left elbow leaning on the table and right hand with closed fist shaken at the head of some unoffending country gentleman on the back benches opposite; anon standing half a step back from the table, with the left hand hanging at his side and the right uplifted so that he might with thumb nail lightly touch the shining crown of his head, he trampled his way through the arguments of the adversary as an elephant in an hour of aggravation rages through a jungle.

It is no new thing for great orators to have extravagant gestures. Peel had none; Pitt but few, and these monotonous and mechanical. But Pitt's father, the great Chatham, knew how to flash his eagle eye, to flaunt his flannels, and strike home with his crutch. Brougham once dropped on his knees in the House of Lords and with outstretched hands implored the Peers not to reject the Reform Bill. Fox was sometimes moved to tears by his own eloquence. Burke, on an historic occasion, brought a dagger on the scene. Sheridan, when nothing else was to be done, knew how to faint; whilst Grattan used to scrape the ground with his knuckles as he bent his body and thanked God he had no peculiarities of gesture.

In respect of originality, multiplicity, and vehemence

of gesture, Gladstone, as in some other things, beat the record of human achievement.

This not infrequent access of uncontrollable excitability made the Parliamentary fortune of some inconsiderable people. Forgetful of the axiom, "Eagles do not catch flies," the great orator and statesman fell an easy prey to the clumsy effort of mediocrity to associate its name with his in the Parliamentary reports. No one was more easily "drawn" than this commanding statesman, this subtle mind, this Italian in the custody of a Scotchman, as Disraeli in illuminating phrase once described him. In the '80 Parliament there sat for some Conservative borough an unattractive, muddle-headed man named Warton. He forced himself first on the attention of the House with the assistance of a snuffbox and a pocket-handkerchief. When he rose to take part in debate he slowly, with portentous solemnity, produced the handkerchief. Under any circumstances it was an article calculated to aggravate mankind. Never since Joseph's wicked brethren stripped him of his cherished garment was beheld such combination of aggressive colour. It was an arrangement of blue and brown, of orange and red, of scarlet and green, with glints here and there of purple and yellow ochre.

At sight of this nightmare of artistic design, slowly shaken preparatory to rendering assistance in the sending forth of a trumpet blast of nasal interjection, the House literally yelled as if in an agony of physical pain. Paying no heed to this outburst, Mr. Warton, with increased deliberation, blew his nose, and with a flourish that flashed in dazed eyes the cruel colours of his astounding handkerchief, put it in his pocket again. Next he produced a snuffbox, not a receptacle for snuff in the ordinary sense of the term, an article that would

lie in the waistcoat pocket, but a roomy chest such as might on occasion serve to carry the necessaries for a night's absence from home. Again the House yelled. Mr. Warton, bearing throughout the aspect of á man sauntering along a country lane, his mind at peace, the air disturbed by no sound harsher than the music of the lark, proceeded to take snuff.

This was the sort of Bœotian who played at will upon the sensitive organisation of the Prime Minister. In the midst of some eloquent phrase, or working out some subtle argument, Warton's hoarse voice would interrupt with cry of "Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" or other remark equally to the point. An ordinary speaker would have ignored the interruption. Gladstone never did. Abruptly stopping the flow of his speech he turned to notice his assailant, sometimes with display of irritation welcomed with ironical cheers from the Opposition, sometimes with cutting irony which drew no blood from Mr. Warton.

> A viper bit a Cappodocian's hide,
> The viper 'twas and not the man who died.

Mr. Warton was not a bright or clever man. But he was shrewd enough to seize the opportunity gratuitously provided for him. He laid himself out to harry Gladstone, and when the Liberal statesman was worried out of office for a brief period in 1895 Mr. Warton was rewarded by a comfortable salaried office, its locale discreetly selected by the Colonial Secretary in the Antipodes. Ashmead-Bartlett, taking note of this success, followed on the same lines, and was in due course knighted and made Civil Lord of the Admiralty. From a different level, but by adoption of the same tactics, the Fourth Party came into operation. Lord Randolph Churchill would, in the course of time,

inevitably have come to the front. It was Gladstone who hastened his advent, quickened his pace by friendly hand. At the time when he was comparatively obscure, the Premier, squirming under his personalities, began to notice him. Following his speeches with flattering attention, he invariably devoted some portion of his reply to the pleased stripling, who nightly took care that he should not be overlooked.

Whilst Gladstone understood the masses, was able to dominate and lead them whither he would, his success as Leader of the House of Commons did not approach the attainment of his lifelong rival Disraeli. In his judgment of individual men he was wanting in the sense of perspective. His Parliamentary manner lacked repose. Hourly he brimmed over with energy of resentment that had been better reserved for worthier persons than those who habitually evoked eruption. During the storm and stress of the Parliament of 1880-5 it used to be said in Ministerial circles that if the Premier could only have been taken away and put to bed on the stroke of midnight public business would have appreciably benefited. There was a good deal of truth in the exaggerated phrase. Gladstone not only wasted time by talking himself; he was too often the cause of waste of time by others. To his presence at a particular moment it was easy to trace loss of a precious hour. Either he would quite unnecessarily be drawn into debate by the chance remark of a quite inconsiderate speaker, bringing up the leader of the Opposition and others to follow, or the mere fact of his presence and the flattering attitude of attention he maintained led to prodigious prolongation of tepid prattle. Others might at the approach of the dinner hour leave the House to solitude and some

hopeless dullard availing himself of his only opportunity of catching the Speaker's eye. The Premier, with the weight of Empire on his shoulders, sat with hand to ear eagerly listening.

Of his conduct of Parliamentary campaigns the last he personally undertook on behalf of the Home Rule Bill was in one aspect the most marvellous. Entering upon it in his eighty-fourth year, he carried it on with a physical and mental force that seemed more than human. If there was a fault in his strategy it was his tirelessness. No point was too small to elude his attention, no interlocutor too small for his rejoinder. The Bill once in Committee, he was in his seat from the time the Chairman took his place at the table up to the hour when the sitting was suspended. In the course of time the large majority of members found the work too dreary for human endurance and went off to seek relaxation. Gladstone was always in his place. He must needs dine, but managed to complete that duty in an incredibly short time, coming back with eager step and anxious face, fearful that by his absence he should have missed some word of wisdom murmured from a back bench.

It is pleasant to think that towards the close of his Parliamentary career there was a softening of the asperity which through its greater length bristled around him. There were times when his treatment by a noisy section of the Conservative Party disgraced an assembly that boasts its gentlemanhood. This behaviour reached its climax in the spring of 1878. On a memorable night in that noisy session, Gladstone, having voted against some ill-considered proposal to deal with a public question with closed doors, was returning to his place on the Front Opposition Bench. A

mob of Conservatives locked in the other division lobby observing him through the glass door, burst into a yell of execration that rang through the empty House. In this same month a mob of music-hall patriots, not to be outdone in good manners, broke the windows of his private house. During the Home Rule debates of 1893 this spirit occasionally broke forth, notably on the night of the free fight on the floor. But it never revived to the extent established in the Jingo Parliament of 1874-80. In the Parliament of 1886-92, I recall no occasion when the veteran statesman was treated by the Conservative Opposition with anything short of the respect due to his high position. On the contrary it was no uncommon thing for the cheers which greeted his interposition in debate to be equally divided between the two political camps.

Gladstone lived through a gradual, now finally established, change in the course of Parliamentary debate. Whilst he and Disraeli sat facing each other, it was the custom for the Leaders on either side to speak late in set debate. One would rise about eleven o'clock, making way for the other between half-past twelve and one in the morning. With the earlier meeting of Parliament and the establishment of the rule automatically closing debate at eleven o'clock it has come to pass that, with rare exceptions, all the important speaking is done before dinner. Gladstone was equal to either contingency. For his great speeches he carefully prepared, bringing down his notes and turning them over as he proceeded. As he often showed, preparation and attendant notes were superfluities. Some of his most powerful and effective speeches were delivered off the spur of the moment, called forth by an incident or argument of current debate. Even at times when

party passion ran riot the House delighted in his lapses into conversation on some topic brought forward by a private member on a Tuesday or a Friday night. He did not in these circumstances make a speech. He just chatted, and those privileged to meet him in private life know how delightful was his conversation.

Brought up in the Parliamentary school of Canning and Peel, he preserved to the last something of the old-fashioned manner. His courtesy was unfailing, his manner dignified, his eloquence pitched on a lofty plane unattainable by men of modern birth. In private as in public, Gladstone, though few men have been so bitterly assailed, rarely said hard things of others. With one exception, Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett is the only man in public life I ever heard him speak of in private with note of personal dislike. Yet, as all familiar with the House of Commons are aware, the Sheffield knight would never have reached the dizzy heights of a Civil Lord of the Admiralty if Gladstone had ignored his existence. With Lord Salisbury remains the honour of having recommended him to Her Majesty for a knighthood. It was Gladstone who laid the foundation for surprising good fortune.

Dean Lake, summing up character with the freedom and kindliness permissible to an old friend, said of Gladstone: "His intellect can persuade his conscience of almost anything." Lecky, quoting this, genially adds: "There is such a thing as an honest man with a dishonest mind," which casts in form of epigram what, regarding Gladstone from early manhood to venerable age, many good people vaguely thought. Lecky distrusted Gladstone as a theologian and hated him as a politician. The man fascinated him. Here is a striking pen-and-ink portrait: "Pitt, Fox and Burke, were painted by

the best portrait painters that England has produced, but I much question whether a stranger who saw their portraits with no knowledge of the men they represented would recognise in any one of them a man of pre-eminent power. No one could stand before a good portrait of Gladstone without feeling that he was in the presence of an extraordinary man. Yet the greatest painter could only represent one of the many moods of that ever-changing and most expressive countenance. Few men have had so many faces, and the wonderful play of his features contributed very largely to the effectiveness of his speaking. It was a countenance eminently fitted to express enthusiasm, pathos, profound melancholy, commanding power, and lofty disdain. There were moments when it could take an expression of intense cunning, and it often darkened into a scowl of passionate anger. In repose it did not seem to me good. With its tightly compressed lips and fierce abstracted gaze, it seemed to express not only extreme determination, but also great vindictiveness, a quality, indeed, by no means wanting in his nature, though it was, I think, more frequently directed against classes or parties than against individuals."

Here is a masterly analysis of his method of controversial speech: "No one could compare with him in dexterity of word-fencing and hair-splitting, and in the evasive subtleties of debate he gave the impression that there was no question or side of a question that he could not argue, no contradiction that he could not explain, no conclusion, however obvious, that he could not evade or define away. Nothing was more curious than to hear him make a speech on a subject on which he did not wish to give an opinion. The long roll of sonorous and misty sentences, each statement so ingeniously qualified,

each approach to precision so skilfully shaded by some calculated ambiguity of phrase, speedily baffled the most attentive listener. He had rhetorical devices, not, I think, of the kind that inspires confidence, which became familiar to careful students of his methods. There was the sentence thrown out in the middle of an argument or statement of policy, of the nature of a back door, enabling the speaker to retire hereafter from his position if it was not convenient to adhere to it. There was the obscure and apparently insignificant phrase, wrapped up in redundant verbiage, attracting no attention, and committing the speaker to nothing, but yet faintly adumbrating a possible change of policy, and destined to be referred to hereafter to justify his consistency in taking some step which had never been suspected or anticipated. There was the contradiction or the statement, apparently so positive, so eloquent, so indignant, that it carried away his audience, but when carefully examined it was found that the sentences were so ingeniously constructed that they did not *quite* cover all the assertions they appeared to contradict or *quite* bind the speaker to all they appeared to imply, and it was soon found that this limitation was carefully intended."

To the end Gladstone remained what he was, even when compared with Mr. Bright in his prime—the finest orator in the House of Commons. In sheer debating power, in the quick give and take of Committee work, he was excelled by Mr. Chamberlain, who, with not less adroitness and with equally full command of language, had a way of going straight to a point and hammering it down. Allured by bypaths of illustration and commentary, enticed into retort on banal interruption, Gladstone sometimes failed to keep the broad way. When it came to lofty sustained oratory he was

unapproachable. One of the most difficult tasks that falls to the lot of Leader of the House of Commons is that of lamenting the death of an eminent public person. Disraeli was so overpowered with this that on a historic occasion, called upon to pronounce eulogy at the grave of an English captain, he borrowed wholesale from the funeral speech of a French statesman.

After all, death, to whomsoever it comes, is a hackneyed theme. There is something chilling in the formal set appearance of the House of Commons gathered to hear a prepared elegy. Through his long career, whether as Leader of the House or Leader of the Opposition, it fell to Gladstone's lot to deliver more graveside speeches than any other Minister. Ever he rose to the varied occasion. It was at such times the House of Commons saw through the haze of party conflict how noble were the proportions of the figure that dwelt among it for more than half a century.

Seventeen years later than Disraeli's quittance of the House of Commons, on March 1st, 1894, there was another historic exit. This time it was Gladstone who fared forth never to return. As in the case of Disraeli, the crowded House of Commons, with the exception of some colleagues on the Treasury Bench, did not know what was pending. For some months the Clubs had been animated by rumours of the Premier's resolution to resign. His hope of carrying an amended Home Rule Bill had been shattered by the House of Lords. They had made havoc with other measures approved by the narrow majority commanded by Ministers in the Commons. Gladstone had passed the age of four score. He had long suffered from deafness. Of late an affection of the eyes limited his power of work.

Members were prepared to hear announcement of resignation but the immediate effect of the speech just delivered, the last and not least brilliant of an unparalleled concourse, was to discredit rumour. Regarding the upright figure standing at the table, watching the mobile countenance, catching gleams of the marvellous eyes flashing contumely and scorn, noting the ardour with which the flag was waved on a new battlefield fronting the arrogance of the House of Lords, it was impossible to associate idea of the veteran voluntarily laying down his arms.

Gladstone sat out the debate that followed on his speech. He watched without bitterness thirty-seven of his nominal followers all unconsciously celebrating the occasion of his final speech by going into the Lobby with the Opposition. The business of the day accomplished, he, without sign of farewell, but with what swelling of the heart who shall say, walked out behind the Speaker's chair never again to look on the scene of many triumphs and some heart-breaking defeats.

One final, broad, enduring distinction between Disraeli and Gladstone was that, whereas the former could not resist the glitter of a coronet when pressed upon his acceptance by an appreciative Sovereign, Gladstone was content with the proud dignity of a Privy Councillorship. Herein he followed the example of his great master, Sir Robert Peel, who not only refused a peerage for himself, but, as Gladstone reminded the late Queen when begging to be excused acceptance of a proffered earldom, he "put upon record what seemed a perpetual or almost a perpetual ordinance for his family." That the ordinance did not prove effective appears from the familiar fact that when Sir Robert's second son stepped down from the Chair of the Speaker of the House of

Commons, long filled with dignity, he did not decline the customary guerdon of a Viscountcy.

Whilst Gladstone was still alive there were not only rumours that he had been offered a peerage but assurances that he had accepted it. The facts come out in Mr. John Morley's "Life" of his old friend and chief. From the personal point of view they are exceedingly interesting. It was no secret in Parliamentary circles that Queen Victoria had no liking for her greatest Minister. She feared the trend of his politics and was annoyed at the deathless energy of his manner. Her Majesty was after all a woman and naturally preferred the more courtly manner of the discreet Dizzy.

It is a matter of history how after the General Election of 1880 Queen Victoria attempted to escape from the injunction imposed upon her by the popular will expressed at the polls to commit to Gladstone the task of forming a new Government. First she sent for Lord Hartington, then for Earl Granville, finally these and all else failing her, she yielded to fate and Mr. Gladstone. Five years later deliverance was at hand. By a coalition between the Tory Party and the Irish Nationalists, Gladstone had by a small majority been beaten on the Budget. He forthwith tendered his resignation and advised Her Majesty to send for Lord Salisbury. Under pressure from the Queen, the Tory Leader accepted office, forming what Mr. Chamberlain, then unregenerate, called the Stop-Gap Government.

Gladstone was temporarily out of office but was actually master of the situation. As a "grand dame" of the Primrose League petulantly said to him, he had a habit of popping up again. He might (as he did) come in again after the next General Election stronger than ever. There was only one means of escape from the

terrible man. If he were safely got to the House of Lords he would be politically shelved. The Queen, perceiving this opening, promptly advanced through it. On June 13th, 1895, she wrote to Gladstone offering him an earldom "as a mark of her recognition of his long and distinguished services. . . The Queen believes that it would be beneficial to his health, no longer exposing him to the pressure from without for more active work than he ought to undertake."

Surely in vain is the net set in sight of any bird, especially one of the age, acuteness and experience of Mr. G. He wrote offering "his humble apology to your Majesty" but declining the coronet. Had he accepted it, the fortunes of political parties and, to a considerable extent, the history of the Empire would have been altered. He remained a commoner, came back after the General Election of 1885 with increased majority, and in the following year crossed the Rubicon, landing on the Home Rule shore.

The last time I was in Gladstone's company was on Monday, June 24th, 1895. The circumstances were peculiar, sharply illustrating one of the phases of his marvellous career. On the previous Friday the Government of Lord Rosebery, to whom he had handed the sceptre of the Liberal Premiership, had been defeated on a snap vote on a question of cordite. The country was face to face with a Ministerial crisis that must inevitably lead to a General Election. Upon the results mighty issues depended. In analogous circumstances happening through sixty years Gladstone would have been the foremost figure of the day, an individuality upon whom all men's thoughts centred. On this June morning he drove through the crowded streets of the metropolis, few among the busy throng turning their

heads to regard him. Three years earlier, had he chanced to make the same journey, his carriage would have been followed by an excited crowd, friendly or hostile, according to political conviction. Now, as he drove along, only here and there a passer-by recognising the familiar face silently raised his hat in respectful salutation. There was passing through the streets of the City, not the strenuous statesman round whom for more than fifty years the turmoil of political warfare had raged. It was merely his ghost, a wraith that had nothing to do with political contests or with majorities in the House of Commons and polling-booths.

Gladstone had just landed from the *Tantallon Castle* with other guests of Sir Donald Currie on the memorable cruise to the opening of the Kiel Canal. The voyage was crowded with interest, culminating in the news flashed to Gothenberg on Saturday morning that the Government had been defeated. There were several Members of the House of Commons on board, and the excitement was intense. What course would Ministers adopt? Would they dissolve, resign, or carry on, ignoring a snap division on a side issue?

It would be peculiarly interesting to know what Gladstone thought of it all. At the time of his resignation of the Premiership there was current in inner circles of the House of Commons a circumstantial story pointing to something rather like hustling him out of his own Cabinet. It ran to the effect that, dropping one day, as was his frequent habit at the time, into talk of "my time of life," and the imminence of unbuckling his armour and laying down his lance, his faithful and affectionate colleagues, with one accord, assumed that this was a formal and deliberate act of resignation. They

accepted it forthwith, preventing further explanation by the clamour of their regret.

Probably there is not a word of truth in the story. Certainly there was at the time a readiness in some influential quarters on the Liberal benches to believe that things would go more smoothly for the party if it were relieved of Gladstone's personal predominance, and, above all, from the necessity, inevitably concurrent with his Premiership, of the millstone of Home Rule remaining tied round the Liberal neck. However that may have been, the experiment of leading the Liberal Party without his collaboration had been tried. After running for little more than twelve months it ended in sudden, almost ludicrous, collapse. Gladstone must have been more than human if his contemplation of the catastrophe of the hour was not lightened by some personal reflections.

When he came on board the *Tantallon Castle* he was recovering from an attack of bronchitis, which at one time threatened abandonment of the voyage. His marvellous powers of recuperation were speedily asserted. One day, when we had been a week out, I chanced to look astern from the bow of the ship and saw two figures walking briskly along the quarter-deck. One was Lord Rendell. By his side strode a man in a curious cape, whose cut suggested that it had been made by a village tailor. It was not easy to think that this was the broken-down old man who wearily walked aboard at Gravesend. Yet it was Gladstone, striding along at a pace that evidently tried his companion, talking the while with animated gestures.

Bound for Denmark, the first thing that occurred to him was the necessity of learning the language. He accordingly brought on board with him a Danish

dictionary and one or two books in that language. He spent the whole of the morning in his state cabin studying Danish, and before we returned to the Thames he had made such way that he was able to follow the course of his book.

At Copenhagen the King and Queen of Denmark came on board to luncheon. After luncheon the Royal party went on deck. It was a brilliant summer afternoon, and the pier to which the *Tantallon Castle* was moored was crowded by a throng of Copenhagen citizens. Only one figure was missing to their sight, and that the one they had come forth to see. Whilst the gay throng —King and Queen, princes, peers, members of the House of Commons, Englishmen and Danes—paced up and down the deck gaily chatting, Gladstone, with his back to the open doorway of the state cabin, sat as completely absorbed in his new study of languages as if he were at Hawarden. Later, when the King and Queen had departed, the Copenhageners were admitted on board. It was found necessary to rail off the deck on to which Gladstone's state cabin opened. But he was plainly visible, still going on reading, as Madame Defarge went on knitting, apparently wholly unconscious of the existence of the crowd straining at the barrier hungrily staring at him.

When announcement was authoritatively made that Gladstone had resigned the Premiership, it was not realised that that step included his absolute withdrawal from Parliamentary life. As a matter of fact, after he walked out of the House on the 1st of March, 1894, having delivered what Mr. Balfour hailed as "nothing less than a declaration of war against the ancient constitution of these realms," he was never more seen in the place where for sixty years he had loomed so

large. Probably not more than a dozen of those listening to the speech knew it was the last he would deliver in his capacity as Prime Minister. Mr. Chamberlain did not chance to be present. From the Peers' Gallery the Duke of Devonshire, who was not in the secret, and Lord Rosebery and Earl Spencer, who were, looked down on the animated scene. The speech lasted for just half an hour, and save for a slight huskiness of voice, gave no indication of failing power, mental or physical.

It is another of the rumours of the day that Gladstone had not intended this speech, delivered on the Lords' amendments to the Parish Councils Bill, to be his final word in the House of Commons. He designed on a later occasion deliberately to make his adieux. The intention, if ever formed, was not carried out, the House of Commons being the poorer by a great speech and a moving scene. It was taken for granted that though no longer Premier, he would from time to time look in, sitting in the capacity of a private Member. In such case he would have taken the corner seat immediately behind his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, a place associated with striking turns in many political careers. Here Mr. Forster sat when he resigned office as Irish Minister in Mr. Gladstone's earlier Administration. Here Lord Hartington took refuge when, in 1886, another turn of the irrepressible Irish question split the Liberal Cabinet and the party as by a stroke of earthquake. Seated there, as Priam sat at the Scæan Gate, Gladstone would have presented a pathetic and interesting figure. Having cast off the robes of office and sheathed his sword, his helmet now a hive for bees, he would have been scarcely less powerful than in his prime. But it was not to be.

Remembering what happened in 1874 after his famous letter to Lord Granville, with his wail for rest, Gladstone's friends feared that he would mar the dignity of the closing scene by fresh incursions on the political stage. At one time, during the heat of indignation created by the Armenian massacres, this prognostication was on the verge of verification. There were successive days when the family circle at Hawarden feared to hear the announcement that the avenger of the Bulgarian atrocities could no longer remain quiescent whilst the unspeakable Turk was let loose on fresh fields and pastures new in Armenia. Happily, the crisis dwindled, and the temptation was finally resisted.

The House of Commons grows accustomed to any deprivation, proud in the conviction that no man, however incomparable, is to it indispensable. But those intimately familiar with the place know it has never been quite the same since Gladstone walked forth for the last time to the old Lobby cry, "Who goes home?" When he was present, whether on his legs addressing the House, or in semi-recumbent attitude on either Front Bench, he was the cynosure of all eyes. Members watched him all through a sitting, not knowing what a moment might bring forth. A chance word, above all a quotation from one of his speeches, might bring him bounding to his feet in quite unexpected interposition in debate. His memory, always marvellous, had its most striking development in recollection of the very phrases of his own speeches howsoever long ago delivered. Sometimes a man ventured to paraphrase a quotation from his speech. Gladstone was on the moment alert. Bending forward in his seat with gleaming eyes and nervously projected forefinger he cried, "Quote, quote." In other cases where Members brought down with

them selected sentences out of a passage, woe betide them if they attempted anything like garbling. He was down upon them in a moment insisting on full quotation.

His endurance of the mediocre or the commonplace was marvellous to persons of less patience. He sat listening by the hour to what others, whose time was less valuable, denounced as the dreary drip of pointless twaddle. In this respect he was like Disraeli and Bright, distinctly unlike Mr. Arthur Balfour. Bright not being Leader of the House, it was not incumbent on him that he should pay insignificant members the compliment of sitting out their speeches. But that was his habit. Sometimes, when there were but a dozen or a score of members present through the dinner hour, Disraeli would sit immobile, apparently listening, but not inclined to make rejoinder.

During the Parliament of 1880-5 Gladstone not only declined to leave the Treasury Bench till the House was up, but he could not be induced to take more than half an hour for his dinner. The habitual result was that members having him for an audience, seeing the chance of drawing him into debate, and so having their names associated with his illustrious one in the Parliamentary Reports, went on talking when otherwise the chill indifference of the rest of the House would have shortened their speech.

Whatever Gladstone did, whether the thing were big or little, he did it with all his might. Whatever might be the subject he took in hand, however comparatively trivial, he bent all his energies upon its consideration. Coming to the dinner table, after whatever arduous work in Parliament or on the platform, he was as full of life and energy as if he had spent an idle day in bed, and just got up to dress for dinner.

I was privileged to be much in his company during the Midlothian campaigns, having accompanied him through all save one, the course of which I regretfully watched from the editorial chair of a London daily paper. I am permitted to quote from a private letter I wrote to a friend from Edinburgh, under date 23rd of October, 1890: "I was fortunately placed at dinner at Buchanan's last night, being next to Mrs. Childers, and on the other side of her Mr. G. We three had a good deal of conversation through the dinner, and when the ladies withdrew I was Mr. G.'s right-hand neighbour. He was, as usual, full of life and energy. I noticed, not for the first time, what remarkable evidence of life flashes in his eyes. Even Isaac Holden, marvel of healthy preservation as he is, has that dried-up lack-lustre look about the eyes that comes with extreme old age. Gladstone's eyes are almost as bright as a boy's, certainly brighter than those of the average man of half his age. That is an excellent sign of sustained vigour.

"He was much interested in what I told him about Stafford Northcote's 'Life,' of which I have an early copy, and looked through it this morning. I could see that, even now, he has not forgiven his old pupil and secretary for going over to the enemy, and undertaking to frame their Budgets. He did not say anything disparaging of him, but would not echo my warm praise. He got quite excited because none of us could remember what position Stafford Northcote filled in the Stop-gap Government of 1885. He thought it a lamentable thing that with Childers there, myself, and others intimate with Parliament, no one could settle the point. 'Herbert,' he was sure, would know. But Herbert chanced to be out of the room. As soon as he came in,

Gladstone was down on him with a question. Herbert said Northcote had taken the Colonies, which seemed so probable that all agreed that was it. Later I got hold of the invaluable 'Whitaker' and discovered that none of us knew, for the best of all reasons. In that Ministry Northcote held no administrative office, having gone to the Peers bearing the style First Lord of the Treasury.

"We talked a good deal about books, especially 'The Bride of Lammermoor,' which he prefers above all Scott's novels. Talking about novel-writing, he said, 'Modern authors do not seem to feel the necessity of inventing a plot before starting to write their story. Wherein they radically differ from Walter Scott and other elders. Nowadays a novel is made up of character-sketching and conversation.' He was much interested on hearing that just before leaving town I had been at the first night of *Ravenswood* at the Lyceum. He cross-examined me closely as to how certain episodes and scenes in the novel, more especially the tragic last scene, were worked out on the stage. He is profoundly interested in the piece and means to go and see it as soon as he gets back to town."

Gladstone's conversation was as delightful as some of his speeches were magnificent. No subject was too erudite for him, no topic too minute. Yet he did not sin, as Coleridge did, monopolising the opportunities of the table by indulgence in monologue. As a rule he let others start the conversation and followed the lead whithersoever it trended. The odds were that, as happened in a particular case I recall at Dalmeny, whatever experts were present, Gladstone excelled them in knowledge of their subject. During one of the Midlothian campaigns the question of the Scotch Church was much

to the front. Lord Rosebery, desirous that the Candidate for Midlothian might have information from the highest source, invited a well-known Scotch divine to luncheon. The Principal, nothing loth, started the subject. It was Gladstone who finished it, quickly taking up the running and disclosing intimate and all-embracing acquaintance with the intricate question.

Shock of the news that came from Hawarden on the 19th of May, 1898, telling how at last the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl broken, was lessened by the long note of preparation for the worst. Through weary weeks the English-speaking people had sat by the bedside of England's greatest son, waiting for the inevitable end, which those who loved the patient sufferer most were least willing to see delayed. Nevertheless when the blow fell, and men said to each other in hushed voice, "Gladstone is dead!" there came upon the senses realisation of all it meant for mankind.

In the House of Commons, where he chiefly lived, where for three-score years, in sunshine and in shade, he played a leading part, the gap was widest and deepest. Since, on March 1st, 1894, he quietly walked out, after making his last speech, Members had time to realise how supreme was the guerdon of his daily presence. It was not only that there was withdrawn from debate the greatest Parliamentary orator of the century. With his departure the House of Commons suffered loss of a note of dignity, a colouring of lofty character, which remains irreparable. Happily, the normal tone of personal conduct in the Commons is high. Anything mean, unworthy the character of an English gentleman, any tendency to tampering with the truth, any suspicion of dishonest intent, is swiftly,

angrily resented. Beyond and above that ordinary condition there was a something magnificently, though simply, lofty in Gladstone's moral attitude,

> His strength was as the strength of ten
> Because his heart was pure.

He had a manner of old-fashioned courtesy that was contagious in fashioning debate. His subtle influence for good in these respects was far-reaching. When he sat on the Front Bench on either side of the Speaker's Chair, he was a lodestone concentrating the gaze of all eyes. It was natural enough that strangers in the gallery, paying a rare visit, should turn to feast their eyes upon Gladstone. That was a touch of nature that made them kin with Members who saw him every day. If he stood up to speak, he naturally engrossed attention. His distinction was that, when he sat as a listener, he was, in most cases, more closely the object of regard than was the man speaking. Members watched him keenly, wondering what he thought of this or that just said, and whether there was probability of his being dragged into the debate. Once on his legs, the brooding meditation bubbled into excitement. From first to last, however far off the last might be, he held the attention of the House, charming it with his eloquence, even where he could not convince it by his argument.

The fascination he had for the House of Commons it wielded over him. When the time for separation came, it was as hard to think of him wending his way through daily life without spending some hours in the Commons as it was for the House to conceive itself upstanding with this prop withdrawn. It was an unpremeditated thing that he never re-entered the House after his

historic speech in March, 1894. Perhaps he feared its potent spell. Having deliberately resolved to retire from Parliamentary life, he felt it wiser not to subject himself to the temptation of even an hour's return to the old familiar scene. He could not forget how, just twenty years earlier, having, in consideration of "my time of life," arrived at the conclusion that he would do best to spend what remained in retirement, he retraced his steps. I remember well, how, in the Session of 1875, within a month or two of his letter to Lord Granville confirming his resignation of the Leadership of the Liberal Party, he began furtively to look in at Westminster. It was characteristic of his unconsciously dramatic tendencies that he dressed the part of a man who had no personal concern with what was going forward. Whilst leading the House up to the close of the Session of 1873—as when, later, he resumed his position—he made a practice of leaving his hat in his private room, a habit which led to the memorable scene in the Parliament of 1880 described on an earlier page. When in the Session of 1875 he occasionally looked in, he brought with him not only his hat, which he wore when seated, but his overcoat, his walking-stick, even his gloves. What were Parliament or politics to him, "at the age of sixty-five, and after forty-two years of laborious public life," voluntarily withdrawn from the scene? A casual wayfarer passing down Parliament Street, seeing the gateway of Palace Yard open, he had just dropped in, and, above all things, hoped he didn't intrude.

At the time of his second retirement, the weight of twenty years was added to the burden of his prodigious labours. His mind was as bright, his intellect as keen, as ever. But the flesh truly was weak. So he came

not any more, and the House of Commons is poorer through all time to come by the loss of his illuminating presence. His place remains empty, and, as far as one can see, there is no promise on the furthest horizon of its being filled.

(2) MR. DISRAELI.

March, 1874—March, 1880.

In the year 1870, Mr. Froude, in a private letter that saw the light a quarter of a century later, wrote: "I have been among some of the Tory magnates lately. They distrust Disraeli still, and will never again be led by him. So they are as sheep that have no shepherd. Lord Salisbury's time may come. But not yet."

This remark by a shrewd observer accurately describes the situation four years before Disraeli reached a stage of his career which, crowned with the Premiership, led to his becoming the idol of the aristocratic landed party accustomed to draw its skirts close as he passed, lest by his touch he should defile them. One of his bitterest enemies at this epoch was the man who, a few years later, was to fall in with his train and share the popular acclaim that welcomed the bringing home from Berlin of Peace with Honour.

"There are," Lord Salisbury wrote in unregenerate days, "three things from which mankind cannot escape —toothache, taxation, and Mr. Disraeli."

For twenty years the *Saturday Review*, to which Lord Salisbury before he succeeded to the Peerage, was one of the most frequent and brilliant contributors, weekly attacked Disraeli. Animosity to the brilliant Parliamentary free lance, was felt and freely expressed in quarters loftier even than those that homed blue-blooded Toryism. In 1851 Lord Stanley, afterwards Earl of Derby, called upon to form a Ministry,

apologetically informed the Queen that he would "have to propose" Dizzy as one of the Secretaries of State. According to a memorandum written by the Prince Consort, the Queen interrupted him by saying that "she had not a very good opinion of Mr. Disraeli, on account of his conduct to poor Sir Robert Peel"; but she would not aggravate Lord Stanley's difficulties by passing a sentence of exclusion on him. "She must, however, make Lord Stanley responsible for his conduct, and, should she have cause to be displeased with him when in office, she would remind Lord Stanley of what now passed." Lord Stanley undertook the responsibility, and excused his friend for his former bitterness by his desire to establish his reputation for cleverness and sharpness. Nobody, he pleaded, had gained so much by Parliamentary schooling, and he had of late quite changed his tone.

It was characteristic of Disraeli, when he obtained a position in which he might pick and choose Parliamentary seats, that he selected a county and remained constant to it to the end. He greatly "fancied himself" as a country squire and loved to find an auditory among farmers and small landowners. I have vivid recollection of seeing and hearing him at the market ordinary at the George Hotel, Aylesbury. It was shortly after the Dissolution of 1874, and the decks were cleared for action. I quote from my diary a description of the scene: "The dinner hour was fixed for half-past one, but the room being open and the covers laid an hour earlier, the guests flocked in, secured their seats, and patiently waited the coming of Mr. Disraeli. Some of the regular frequenters of the market dinner arriving in due course found every seat occupied, and were fain to go upstairs into a sort of minstrels' gallery that

overlooked the curious old room, whence they looked down upon the dining tables like the Peri at the gates of Paradise. At the other end of the room a table was spread crosswise, and was further distinguished by a row of empty chairs standing before it. For nearly an hour these chairs, dedicated as it was tacitly understood to Mr. Disraeli and his personal friends, were avoided, though long and wistful regards were cast upon them by would-be diners wandering round the tables in hopeless quest of vacant places.

"At length an agricultural gentleman who had come in late and failed in the endeavour to convince another agricultural gentleman seated at the corner of a table that the seat was 'his,' because he was accustomed to 'sit in it 200 days in the year,' defiantly disposed of himself at the head table. 'He had,' he observed, 'dined there last Saturday and the Saturday before,' and, in brief, could look back through a long vista of Saturday dinners eaten in the room. Come what might, he meant to add one more to the number. With his appropriation of one of the chairs, the spell was broken, and in a few minutes there were not more than four seats left for the expected guests. Worse still, there began to manifest itself in the company, a spirit of aggressive independence, the existence of which no one could have suspected whilst yet the cross table was uninvaded. At half-past one, there being no signs of Mr. Disraeli's approach, a farmer rose to his feet and said:

"'Look here; this is an ordinary market dinner. He's coming to dine with us; we aren't going to him, so I think that Mr. Rhodes should take the chair as usual.'

"There was a moment's solemn pause as the orator sat down. Each man looked at his neighbour, and then at the daring speaker. None liked to speak first, but when

somebody timidly said, 'Hear, hear,' the cry was taken up till quite a storm of acquiescence in the proposal urged Mr. Rhodes to take the chair. After a natural exhibition of coyness, the gentleman indicated consented to accept the greatness thrust upon him. The sturdy spirit of independence which began to pervade the erewhile quiet and subdued assembly was not satisfied even with this vindication of the farmers' rights. The hour for the market ordinary was half-past one. It was now twenty-five minutes to two, and there was no sign of approach of the expected guest. As their demeanour subsequently proved, the agriculturists present were good Conservatives, and loyal to their chief. But dinner is a sacred thing.

"'Hadn't we better have the dinner in, Mr. Chairman?' enquired a voice from the distant end of the table.

"The chairman was judiciously deaf to this appeal; but when it had been repeated, and taken up from other quarters of the room, it became impossible to ignore it, and after looking gravely round the tables, the chairman said, 'Waiter, hadn't you better bring in the dinner?'.

"The waiter had replied, 'Yes, sir,' and leaving the room, had reappeared, bearing aloft a great dish of salmon, when a stir arose in one of the side chambers branching off from the cross table. In another minute Mr. Disraeli struggled through the crowd, and presented himself at the head of the room. Everybody stood up and cheered and clapped his hands, till the honoured guest, tired of bowing his acknowledgment of the hearty reception, sat down. Other waiters appearing with other dishes of salmon, grace was said and dinner commenced. Mr. Disraeli, who had driven over from

Hughenden in a carriage and four, looked wearied and chilled with the cold, and after one or two polite attempts to engage the worthy but laconic chairman in conversation, sat silent and self-engrossed. Dinner over, the health of the candidates for the county was proposed, the right honourable gentleman's reply rivalling the speech of the chairman in brevity, and then took place a general adjournment to the Corn Exchange. This room was quite full, the galleries at either end being appropriated to a company of ladies, who lightened up the dingy hall with an almost unbroken display of blue ribbons.

"Mr. Disraeli lost no time, after the cheers which greeted his rising had subsided, in gaining the ear of his audience, and putting them in a good temper. Speaking very slowly, in voice and manner conveying a sense of amused bewilderment, he observed that Parliament had been dissolved, but what the reason might be he was unable to tell them, and 'he believed Her Majesty's Ministers are equally ignorant.' He then gravely censured the conduct of the Government in dissolving Parliament, conduct which probably was 'an act of black treachery,' but certainly was 'essentially un-English.' Thenceforward the address lapsed into a prolonged attack, not upon the Government as a body, but upon Mr. Gladstone as a Minister. The audience listened with open ears to the story of the Prime Minister's alleged misdeeds in the matter of the correspondence which followed upon his resignation of office in the spring—learnt without amazement that he, Gladstone, was personally and solely responsible for the Crimean War—made no sign of dissent when he introduced a daring paraphrase of the election addresses of Mr. Lowe and Mr. Gladstone—were palpably puzzled by the

argument about indirect and direct taxation, with special reference to the Income Tax, and drooped visibly under the disquisition upon the Straits of Malacca.

"Perceiving this latter condition of affairs, Mr. Disraeli wakened them up with another and increasingly notable thrust at the Premier."

This speech was memorable as it led Gladstone, after the custom of Silas Wegg, to drop into poetry. His sarcastic stanzas about the Straits of Malacca had a great run on Liberal election platforms.

Disraeli's advent to the Premiership as the result of the General Election of 1874 transmogrified the House of Commons. The assembly dispersed by the Dissolution was built over a seething volcano. The restless energy, the impetuous temperament of Mr. Gladstone pervaded the scene. It came to pass in the closing Session of the epoch-making Parliament elected in 1868, no Member sticking his card in the back of his seat before prayers on a given day felt assured that before the Speaker left the Chair a Ministerial crisis would not arise. Crises, more or less serious, were of weekly occurrence. Gladstone so frequently declared that he would regard current hostile proceedings on the part of mutineers on his own side as a vote of want of confidence in Her Majesty's Ministers that the threat lost the portent usually attached to it.

With the incoming of Disraeli the scene changed as if by magic. Hardly any fresh legislation was introduced in the broken Session that opened his Premiership, and very modest were the promises in the Queen's Speech of the Session of 1875. With instinctive dramatic art Disraeli personally assumed an attitude and manner in marked contrast with the feverish haste of his predecessor. Silent, impassive, almost sombre in

mood, he sat looking on through the sitting, rarely interposing save in response to questions directly addressed to him.

In the opening days of the first Session there was prepared for him a pitfall that would have been awkward for some men. During the election campaign, angling for the Irish vote, he made some remarks which the Irish Members, uncontradicted at the time, construed as promise of resettling the Irish Government on a popular basis. When Disraeli found himself in a position to give effect to the assumed pledge he was eagerly reminded of it. Gladstone, thus assailed, would have entered upon a long speech designed to explain away the awkward incident. Disraeli shrugged his shoulders.

"It is," he said, "some time since the observations referred to were made, and," he continued, in a stage aside, "a good deal has happened in the interval."

This reply (usually misquoted), has become historic. It answered its purpose in amusing the House, and turning the laugh against Lord Robert Montagu, the Irish Member who brought the matter forward. Lord Robert, losing his temper, insisted upon having a direct reply. There followed a scene of some disorder, during which Dizzy, with one hand thrust in his waistcoat, the other holding his copy of the Orders of the Day, sat with head thrown back looking up at the gaslit ceiling, his contemplation almost ostentatiously withdrawn from the Irish question.

This early promise of aptitude for the position to which he had been called was fulfilled throughout the Session. Unfailing tact, one of the marks of genius, never shone more transcendently. At no period of his career did he rise higher as a Parliamentary speaker,

whilst old Members, recalling Palmerston in his prime, agreed that his management of the House did not excel Disraeli's. Not in the zenith of his popularity after the election of 1868 did Gladstone approach his ancient foeman in personal hold on the House. In the last two Sessions, as we have seen, he entirely lost the control his position as Premier endowed him with. Disraeli's slow rising from the Treasury Bench in the course of debate, the deliberate opening of his speech, signalled the instant filling up of the benches, and that steady settling down to attitude of attention which are the highest compliment that can be paid to a speaker.

Gladstone, among other unfortunate accessories, was hampered in his last Administration by the unpopularity of some of his colleagues. When Garibaldi visited this country the suggestion was made by an enthusiastic admirer that the public cause and private happiness of the Italian patriot would be assured if he married a rich, if possible a titled, English lady. Objection was taken on the ground that Garibaldi was already married.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Beresford Hope, who was of the company. "You can get Gladstone to explain her away."

But Gladstone could not explain away Mr. Ayrton and Mr. Lowe, whose personal unpopularity in the House and the country was sufficient to wreck any Ministry. Disraeli, taking note of what had gone before, set himself with patient endeavour to be polite and courteous to everyone, whether they were political friends or foes. One exception he certainly made. It was to the disadvantage of his ancient foeman, Mr. Lowe. Before the first Session of Parliament under his Premiership had far advanced he found an opportunity of pinking that amiable gentleman. During

the heated debate on the Bill by which Disraeli graciously proposed to bestow upon his Royal Mistress the title of Empress of India, Lowe, speaking in the country, attributed origin of the Bill to the Queen herself, and stated that two Prime Ministers preceding Disraeli had been commanded to introduce a similar measure, and had patriotically begged to be excused.

There was at that time in Parliament a fussy person, by name Charles Lewis, who, though not equipped for the special business by nature or habit, assumed the position of arbiter of manners in the House. He wrote to Lowe asking him whether the report of his speech at Retford was in this particular accurate. Lowe gruffly replied, "My recent speech at Retford contains nothing relating to you, and I decline to answer your question." Lewis, under cover of a motion for a return relating to the oath of Privy Councillors, brought the matter under the notice of the House. Lowe again flatly declined to answer the question, pointing out the inconvenience that would arise if the House were to discuss the utterances of "every spouter at a convivial dinner."

Disraeli saw his opportunity and was not going to let Lowe off so cheaply. With rare display of passion, real or affected, he protested against procedure which he described as commenting on the character of the Sovereign, holding up to public infamy the conduct of her chief adviser. He was proceeding to cite the personal testimony of the Queen on the subject when he was interrupted by loud cries of "Order!" Whilst correcting Lowe he had himself stumbled into disorderly ways. The Speaker interposing reminded him that according to ancient Parliamentary usage the Sovereign's name must not be introduced into debate.

Disraeli bowed to the ruling, but in doing so adroitly succeeded in saying that the Queen had authorised him to state that with no Minister had she at any time held such conversation as that alleged in the Retford speech.

A marked difference in the bearing of the Premier and his predecessor was shown during the intervals of debate occasioned by divisions. Gladstone, going forth with the crowd to record his vote, usually carried with him blotting pad and a sheet of notepaper, utilising the ten minutes or quarter of an hour occupied by the division in getting forward with his correspondence. Failing that, he strode through the Lobby with his head in the clouds, recognising no one. The habit, relatively trivial in importance, had one serious political consequence of which I have personal knowledge. During the contest that preceded his great victory of 1868, Gladstone, visiting Tyneside, was the guest of Sir Joseph Cowen who, from 1865 to 1873, represented Newcastle-on-Tyne. Sir Joseph was a tower of strength to the Liberal Party on Tyneside, and did substantial service in furtherance of Gladstone's campaign. At Stella Hall he made the acquaintance of his host's son, then in the prime of his young life, a man of fascinating personality.

In 1873 Sir Joseph Cowen died, and by an overwhelming majority his son was, in 1874, elected as his successor in the representation of the borough. Arrived at Westminster, young Joseph Cowen, remembering old days, naturally expected to renew his acquaintance with his father's guest. Gladstone, meeting him in the Division Lobby, passed him without sign of recognition. It was a mere accident, a pardonable forgetfulness of a face. In spite of his high intellectual qualities there was in

Joseph Cowen something of a feminine note of vanity. This unintentional slight rankled in his bosom, and was the beginning of an estrangement from his party and his leader which in years to come did both grievous harm on Tyneside.

There is another little story about Disraeli which marks the different temperament on presumably small matters of this kind. There was among the Irish Members in the '74 Parliament one Dr. O'Leary, a pompous little man who did not bring with him to the House of Commons his best "bedside manner." On one of the critical stages of the Imperial Titles Bill, Disraeli was nervously anxious to secure a majority the magnitude of which would be pleasing to his Sovereign. He went more than usually out of his way to pick up stray votes. Chancing one evening to notice Dr. O'Leary bustling along ahead of him in the Library corridor, he overtook him, and laying a hand familiarly on his shoulder remarked, "Dear Dr. O'Leary, the resemblance is most striking. I really thought I saw again my old friend, Tom Moore."

The vain little gentleman was captured. In all succeeding divisions on the Imperial Titles Bill the name of Dr. O'Leary figured in the Ministerial list of voters.

Disraeli had something approaching a personal encounter with another Irish Member, not quite so agreeable in its incidence. This was Major O'Gorman, whom bountiful nature, eager to show her versatility when throned in a verdant island, sent to the same Parliament with Dr. O'Leary. The Major was nearly twice as high, more than twice the *girth*, of the Doctor. A national song writer hymned his fame in verse that thus began:—

Of all the M.P.'s
That Parliament sees
From Session to Session, I'll wager
Neither Saxon nor Scot
Can pretend that they've got
A Member to match the Major.
Our portly and ponderous Major,
Our mighty, magnificent Major,
The councils of State
Have no man of such weight
Or such girth as our bowld Irish Major.

One night, rising to wind up debate on a Coercion Bill, Disraeli opened his speech with the characteristic remark, "This is a measure of necessity, passed in the spirit of conciliation." The Major had just come in refreshed from dinner. Taking his usual seat below the Gangway he folded his hands over his capacious stomach, closed his eyes, and prepared for a snooze in anticipation of an all-night sitting. The voice of the Premier daintily propounding his paradox roused the Major.

"No," he roared in thunderous voice.

"If that is to be taken for a reply," Disraeli wittily said, "I must observe that in accordance with the rules of debate that forbid a Member to speak twice on the subject before the House, the gallant gentleman is precluded from taking further part in these proceedings."

The Major rose with such alacrity as was possible to his weight and shaking his hat threateningly at the Premier roared, "I have not spoken one word."

The Ministerialists almost drowned his voice in cries of "Order, Order!" But he stood there, symbol of sound and fury, what time the Premier, silent at the table, waited till cessation of the uproar should give him opportunity to proceed. At length the Speaker interposing, and several compatriots hauling on to his

coat tails, the Major sunk back to his seat and Disraeli recommenced his speech.

The truce did not last long. The Major, who had been undergoing a series of internal convulsions that shook with earthquake force his capacious frame, rose, stepped down the Gangway behind the chair of the Serjeant-at-Arms. This was a short cut to the doorway, and it was too lightly assumed that the gallant Member was temporarily retiring for further refreshment. To the horror and apprehension of the crowded House, he was observed to turn to the right, and with slow pace, like an East Indiaman with sails bellied with the summer breeze, to make straight down for the table at which the Premier stood.

What did he mean to do? Would he take up the frail figure standing by the Mace, tuck it under his arm, and walk out with his prize into the Lobby? It would have needed slight effort on the part of the herculean Major, even after dinner, to accomplish this feat. A later Parliament has seen history repeat itself in a similar impulse of an Irish Member to correct by physical assault alleged political shortcomings on the part of a Prime Minister. A newly-arrived Irish Member, differing from Mr. Arthur Balfour on a controversial point, suddenly descended from a back bench below the Gangway, dashed across the floor and making for the Premier danced round him with clenched fists after the manner of street *gamins* wanting another boy to "come on."

Happily it turned out to be only the Major's fun. Having thoroughly alarmed the House he, when he arrived almost within grip of the Premier, again turned sharp to the right, and, walking up the centre Gangway, seated himself on the fourth bench behind the Leader of

the Opposition. This bringing him directly opposite to the Premier enabled him with more point and precision to punctuate his speech by an occasional roar.

Thus playfully did Irish Members disport themselves in the days before new rules of procedure penalised disorderly conduct, offenders incurring the penalty of being carried out shoulder high by four policemen, as was Mr. Flavin one May morning in the history of the last Unionist Parliament.

Had Disraeli lived to observe the habit of modern Ministers in respect of attendance throughout a sitting he would have been deeply shocked. For himself he not only sat through a debate, however comparatively unimportant, but expected his colleagues to keep him company on the Treasury Bench. In these days it has come to pass that as soon as questions are over the main body of Ministers retire to their own rooms leaving the Treasury Bench and the affairs of the nation to the colleague whose Department is directly affected by the question under discussion. Up to his last appearance in the Commons, shortly after the Speaker took the Chair Disraeli arrived, and dropped into his accustomed seat opposite the brass-bound box.

Always there were the same minute arrangements. Being seated he draped the tail of his frock-coat over his crossed leg, folded his arms, bent his head, and through the long hours sat immobile. If any thought he slept they were mightily mistaken. His eyes, bright to the last, furtively surveyed the enemy's camp, ever returning to the bench opposite if Gladstone happened to be in his place. He always dined in the House, wherein he differed from the habit of modern Prime Ministers. Unlike Gladstone, he rarely entered into conversation with colleagues seated near him, an

exception being made in the case of Lord Barrington, who held the office of Vice-Chamberlain of the Queen's Household. Sometimes late in dull sittings, when the Vice-Chamberlain gaily chatted to him the grim visage would be literally distorted by a smile. Disraeli, never forgetful of personal services, before he died raised his old Treasury Bench crony from the position of an Irish lord to a peerage of the United Kingdom.

In February, 1874, when the issue of the General Election was still undetermined, and when Disraeli and Gladstone stood face to face as candidates for national preference, Mr. Lowe, addressing his constituents, indulged, as was his wont, in a few remarks personal to Disraeli. "There is," he said, "something about Mr. Disraeli, setting aside his party views and opinions, as to which you must form your own opinions, which makes him an exceedingly uncomfortable person to contemplate as Prime Minister of this country, armed with all this power. There is a sort of harum-scarum, slap-dash, inconsiderate, reckless, inaccurate way of dealing with things which renders him, if there is to be any sympathy between the ruler and the ruled, a very unfit person to conduct the affairs of a business-like nation like ours." And again: "There is another ground that frightens me with regard to Mr. Disraeli, and that is his foreign policy. His mind, though not particularly apt to fasten itself upon details, is always seeking something new and wonderful. He is a teratologist. He is always trying to find out something the public never heard of; so that the public may say, 'Here is a wonderful man, who, while we have been thinking upon these everyday matters, has been discovering something quite new.'"

This last passage will probably appear to some people absolutely prophetic.

As a Parliament man Disraeli has but few rivals. The only statesmen with whom he is comparable is Palmerston, and the difference between their several characters almost obscures the partial similitude. If we say that they were both gay in their manner of dealing with the House of Commons on the questions that come before it, we shall perhaps have said all that is possible. Even their gaiety was of quite distinct kinds. Lord Palmerston was jaunty; Disraeli was inclined to be sardonic. Lord Palmerston commanded the admiration and allegiance of the House of Commons because he was, in a singular degree, a personification and incarnation of the English character. Disraeli's most indiscriminate admirer never suggested this as a basis for adulation.

It is easier to contrast Disraeli with predecessors in office than to find points of resemblance. Of all men in the world he was least like Gladstone. History never brought into nearer or stranger juxtaposition two eminent men so absolutely opposed to each other in ways of thought and manner of speech. Gladstone was intense, earnest, thorough. Disraeli was indifferent, polite, superficial. Gladstone, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, would as readily have placed a penny on the Income Tax as have made a joke. Disraeli, with an equally light heart, did either as chance befell. As makers of speeches it is a not insignificant thing to note that, whilst you frequently heard the verdict pronounced that Gladstone had made a "great" speech, you never heard that adjective in connection with Disraeli's addresses. His speeches were "clever," never great. Perhaps in a general way the two adjectives will describe the two men. One was great with all the force of a high moral character and a supreme intellect; the other was clever, great only in the sense that his cleverness was superlative.

If this be granted it must also be admitted that if a man would prosper in the House of Commons he had better be clever than great. Perhaps lesser natures instinctively revolt against colossal superiority. Perhaps the average of men have more sympathy with what is clever than with what is great. However it be, there remains no doubt that regarded merely as a Leader of the House of Commons, Disraeli stood as far above Gladstone as Gladstone towered above him in other qualities indicated. To be moved to laughter requires less effort on the part of the subject operated upon than to be forced to admire. The mind grows weary of being on the stretch of admiration, more especially after dinner.

Gladstone sinned by reason of his intensity. He threw himself heart and soul, even body, into any question with the illumination of which he charged himself. He was constantly guilty of the classical and still mortal offence that he went on refining and thought of convincing when his hearers thought of dining. Even his matchless eloquence was not always proof against *ennui*. Many of his speeches would have been twice as successful had they been half as long. Disraeli never bored the House of Commons except on those rare occasions when he really felt he must make a great speech.

Mr. Lowe put his finger on a cardinal weakness in Disraeli's character when he spoke of "his mind not being particularly apt to fasten itself upon details." If there were not in the world an awkward prejudice for facts, Disraeli's career would have been one unbroken triumph. As it was, he often had the better of facts; but at best they hampered him. Thus, when he had to make a Ministerial statement involving reference to a number of facts, it affected his spirits and depressed his

manner. On such occasions he was accustomed to assume a peculiar attitude and to affect a particular tone. His manner was solemn, almost funereal. His voice issued through pursed-up lips, producing a tone that had in it something of the quality of the passing bell. It was in this tone and with this manner that the Premier was accustomed to make those references to the Sovereign and the Empire with which in troublesome times his speeches were studded.

In what may be called this empirical frame of mind he was heard at his worst. At his best he was incomparable. As a phrasemaker, a man who could with a combination of two or three words label, to some extent lame, an adversary for life, he had no equal. His passion, rarely indulged in, always seemed feigned, and was rather funny than tragic. But his polished shafts of sarcasm, his feathered darts of wit, his gilded dainty bullets of irony, flew about the House at will and never missed their mark. This gift he retained to the last, though, circumstances being more prosperous, his manner was more benign. Always personally courteous, his delicate attentions to individuals increased in value as they were handed down from a greater height. Natural instinct, sharpened and cultured by long experience, made him a rarely gifted judge of men. Nearly everybody wants something. Disraeli never made the fatal mistake of offering anything to the very rare exceptions, nor did he blunder in the discrimination of his gifts to those who expected. A friendly nod, a jest privately administered, or an invitation to dinner, will secure some men whom baronetcies could not buy. Disraeli knew these niceties of disposition and took infinite pains to observe them. He never passed a favour unnoticed, never forgot a friend, and considered

no man his enemy, save Gladstone and Mr. Lowe. He knew that majorities are made up of units, and that a unit abstracted from the Opposition benches counts two in a division. Thus, if, when in the House of Commons, his watchful eye observed wavering on the part of an individual opposite, he somehow or other contrived before twenty-four hours had passed to come into personal contact with the waverer.

Lord Rowton, the popular Monty Corry, long time Disraeli's Private Secretary, told me of a habit of his old chief illustrative of his painstaking effort to keep things straight. When the division bell rang he made off to the Lobby in the first flight of Members. During the winter months there was a particular fireplace before which the Premier stood, with coat tails hung over his arms, apparently intent on nothing more important than comfortably warming himself. But his keen eye was on the passing throng of his followers. Before leaving Downing Street to go down to the House his faithful secretary had jotted down the names of one or two with whom, for varied reasons, a few minutes' friendly conversation was desirable. As one passed Disraeli signalled him with friendly nod, and when it was time to move on to the wicket this harmless, quite accidental conversation had probably unravelled a coil which, left unnoticed, might have hampered the machinery of the Government.

Towards the end of the Session of 1875 a marked change came over the Prime Minister. Up to that time his happy management of the House and its affairs was the theme of universal praise. He always knew when to be silent and when to speak. Moved to speech he ever said the right word. Towards the close of the Session it seemed as if a glamour had fallen upon him.

From the most skilful he became the most maladroit of Ministers. Never dull except when he deliberately set himself to make a speech as lengthy as the average of Gladstone's, Disraeli rarely endangered his popularity by such practice. He was at his best during the Question hour. His replies, often epigrams, always bristled with point, glistened with polish. At the beginning of the Session of '76 his friends and admirers noted with pain and alarm that he was losing his airy grace of manner, just sufficiently spiced with audacity, failing in his felicitous phrasemaking, appetisingly peppered with personality. These qualities lacking there was not much left, and the residue was not wholly desirable.

To tell the truth, and it is told in mournful numbers, Dizzy was growing dull. In May of this year signs of breakdown of health were manifest. He was indeed so ill that his condition gave rise to gravest apprehension. He was not the man to give in. With his usual pluck he came down as usual at Question time and, crawling to the Treasury Bench, threw himself into his seat, where he reclined for an hour or so, with haggard cheeks, indrawn, corpse-like. After a while he was obliged to forego even this effort at sprightliness, and for three or four days his familiar presence was missed in the House.

On the 12th of August, 1876, the House of Commons was not a lively place to look upon. It was the last working day of a Session prolonged and exhaustive. The Eastern Question was passing through its acutest phase. The civilised world had been shocked by the atrocities in Bulgaria. Gladstone, awakening from his temporary lethargy, had lifted up his voice in burning denunciation in the House of Commons, was presently to carry the fiery cross through towns and counties. Disraeli, tempted by the felicity of the phrase, in a fatal

moment sneered at the report of the outrages as "coffee-house babble." With great difficulty, always pushed onwards by facts, he had been obliged to retreat from that position and to face the reality.

The Liberal Opposition in the House of Commons, recovering from the depression that weighed them down in '74, was active and persistent. The Irish Members grew increasingly aggressive. There was war abroad and tumult at home. For Ministers the only bright gleam on the horizon was the fact that the Session was at last over, and that for five months they would have peace from Parliamentary interpellation.

On this particular night the House was nearly empty and altogether dull. The Appropriation Bill had reached its third stage. This dealt with, there remained only the ceremony of Prorogation. Under ordinary circumstances the House would have been emptier still. But the Liberals had made up their mind for a final fling, and, stopping short of challenging the Government to a division, they put up Evelyn Ashley to move an amendment calling attention to Ministerial *laches* in respect to the outrages in Bulgaria. The Premier sat through the debate with folded arms, knees crossed and head bent down, presenting an aspect of one whose thoughts were far away, for whom the ceaseless flow of talk from the benches opposite had not the slightest interest. Forster brought his heavy artillery to bear upon the Government, and was answered with painstaking verbosity by Bourke, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Others took part in the debate. Towards nine o'clock Sir William Harcourt rose, and addressed the House at considerable length.

It is possible that till this moment the Premier had not intended to reply. The speeches were what Carlyle

called "thrice-boiled colewort." Served up over and over again through the long Session, there was nothing new or useful to add. But it would not do for the Session to close with the Opposition having the last word. Accordingly when Harcourt resumed his seat Disraeli stood at the table.

He spoke for half an hour, but the speech, though ever memorable, did not approach the level of his ordinary success. The talk from the other side dealt closely with facts and figures. Through a long and brilliant career facts and figures had ever been Mr. Disraeli's chiefest difficulties. But the charges formulated were serious; were calculated to impress the public, and must be met. So with dull manner and level voice the Premier went through or round the points raised, and attempted to vindicate his Government.

Here and there the speech was lightened by playful attacks on Harcourt, "who," he observed with great gravity, "will be in the future one of our greatest statesmen."

Speaking on questions of foreign policy, Disraeli always finished up with a tag, some bristling words calculated to call forth a cheer from good Conservatives. "Our duty at this critical moment," he said, raising his voice, puffing out his cheeks, and beating the air with his hands, "is to maintain the Empire of England, nor will we ever agree to any step that may obtain for a moment comparative and false prosperity that hazards the existence of the Empire."

These—though at the time not half a dozen of the men who heard them were aware of the fact—were the last words spoken in the House of Commons by Benjamin Disraeli. The speech itself was so evidently

unpremeditated there could scarcely be any design in the choice of the concluding sentence. Yet it is a remarkable coincidence that the very last word uttered by the great Minister, at the table where he had so many triumphs, was "Empire." Of all words in the English language that was the one held in his highest favour.

For the maintenance and extension of the British Empire he had, since he reached power, worked and planned, risked and plotted. He had made his Queen an Empress. On this August day, knowing he would nevermore lift his voice in the House of Commons, he sat down with the word Empire on his lips.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Disraeli resumed his seat, late for the last working day of the Session. The Appropriation Bill passed its ultimate stage and Members flocked out. There remained only some formal business to be accomplished prior to the empty ceremony of Prorogation. Amid the buzz of conversation, Disraeli rose and strolled down the floor.

His custom, common to all Ministers, was to avail himself of the private key which gave ingress and egress at the door behind the Speaker's Chair. Now the Premier walked down the floor of the House between the two camps, and turning before he reached the Bar, made low obeisance to the Speaker. He stood a moment gazing round the House. What thoughts must have crowded upon his mind, already occupied with the momentous secret that on the following morning was to break upon an astonished world!

Forty years earlier he entered the House, and presently made that famous speech in which he foretold the coming of the time when the jeering throng "*should* hear him." Many with whom he lived and fought had long

ago vanished. Peel, Hume, O'Connell, Palmerston, Russell, Brougham, Cobden, all were gone. Gladstone, with whom the later and more successful portion of his life had been a protracted duel, was not present now to see him leave.

The House was emptying fast. The Speaker and the clerks at the table were busied about small Bills, anxious only to get done and go home. After brief pause Disraeli turned and walked out. No one looking on knew that a momentous episode in the annals of Parliament was accomplished. Of the two figures most familiar in the House of Commons through three decades, one had fared forth never to return. Disraeli was no more. In his place only the Earl of Beaconsfield.

Benjamin Disraeli blossomed into the Earl of Beaconsfield amid surroundings worthy of the occasion. On his retirement from the House of Commons he was, of course, forthwith gazetted Earl, took his title and station. But he did not appear in public till the opening of Parliament in February of the following year, 1877. Queen Victoria, delighting to honour her favourite Minister announced her intention of opening Parliament in person.

At two o'clock the ceremony was to take place. An hour earlier a brilliant assembly gathered in the solemn light that falls through windows richly dight upon the floor of the House of Lords. On occasions when the Sovereign opens Parliament in person, noble lords chivalrously cede their places to wives and daughters. Save the front row of benches on either hand, the floor of the House was on this historic occasion reserved for ladies. Others graced the galleries flanking the walls of the Chamber. The bishops, who usually sit in all the glory of lawn to the right of the Woolsack, abandoned

their position in favour of the Foreign Ministers, who, with their Orders and sashes formed a glittering mass of colour. First to come were the members of the Chinese Legation, looking as if they had stepped off the panel of a tea chest.

In the front row of European diplomatists the tall figure of Count Münster towered head and shoulders above his fellows, among whom were the representatives of Russia, Italy and Spain. The Japanese and the Persian Ministers occupied seats on the second row. Mr. Pierrepoint, the American Minister, was conspicuous by the absolute plainness of his dress. In a crowded assembly of diplomatists, he was the only man who did not wear uniform or display jewelled Orders.

Just before two o'clock the Lord Chancellor, preceded by the Mace, entered, seating himself on the Woolsack. After a *mauvais quart d'heure* a messenger conveyed a signal to his lordship, who rose and left the House.

A whisper arose that the Queen was coming. It was not the rose, though something that lived very near it. All eyes turned toward the door beheld the Prince of Wales appear, leading the Princess. With a rustling sound, the ladies, hitherto seated with opera cloaks covering their shoulders, with one accord threw them off and rose to their feet, diamonds and rubies flashing as if the mines of Golconda had been suddenly uncovered.

The Prince, wearing the ugly robes of a Peer of the British Parliament, seated himself on the chair to the right of the Throne. The Princess arranged herself as well as was possible on the uncomfortably high Woolsack, her face towards the Throne, her back to the throng. Hardly had the noble lords and ladies reseated themselves after receiving the Heir-Apparent and the Princess

than the sound of far-off trumpets announced the arrival of the Queen.

First came the Pursuivant and the Heralds, clad in gorgeous cloth of gold. Immediately after strode a personage in a red cloak tipped with ermine, bearing aloft a jewelled scabbard. There was a fixed solemnity on the face, an expression of impenetrable depth, that seemed familiar. Looking again, there was no mistaking the identity. This was Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield. With eyes bent on the ground, well-measured step, sword rigidly upheld, the newest recruit to the House of Lords walked forward and took up his position on the left of the Throne.

Then came the Queen, followed by the Marquis of Winchester bearing the Cap of Maintenance. The Lord Chancellor stood at the right hand of the Prince of Wales, ready when the time came to serve his Sovereign by reading her speech.

At a signal from the Queen the lords and ladies, dutifully standing, resumed their seats, and the messenger was discharged to summon the faithful Commons. A long and awkward pause followed, during which all eyes were centred, not on the Queen but upon the figure on the left of the Throne. Lord Beaconsfield bore his ordeal as he had stood others less pleasant. Motionless he remained by the side of his Sovereign, unfalteringly bearing aloft the sword. There was on his face no more expression than he had been accustomed to show in the House of Commons when Gladstone fervently denounced his policy, or convincingly confuted his arguments. The ceremony did not occupy many minutes. When it was over Lord Beaconsfield turned as if on a pivot, and, still holding the sword aloft, marched out before the Queen, doubtless grateful that

it was over, and that Benjamin Disraeli had been ceremoniously introduced to his Peers as the Earl of Beaconsfield.

Of all Disraeli's conquests there was none more unexpected and complete than that obtained over Queen Victoria. The Prince Consort shared in extreme degree the prejudice existing among British gentlemen against one whom they were disposed to regard as a Jew adventurer. The Queen devotedly shared all her husband's likes and dislikes. Disraeli disclosed the secret of his triumph. He had, he said, a simple rule when talking with the Queen. "I never deny; I never contradict; I sometimes forget." He indicated another phase when he said, "Gladstone treats the Queen like a public department; I treat her like a woman."

* * * * * *

"I always hold that no one is ever missed," wrote the still young Disraeli from Paris, under date 22nd November, 1839; "but he (the Duke of Wellington) is so great a man that the world would perhaps fancy his loss irreparable." Lord Beaconsfield has been dead these twenty-seven years, and the truth of his apothegm has been abundantly proved. When he passed away in the plenitude of his power, victor in everything; trusted friend and Minister of the Sovereign who had at one time been barely civil to him; idol of a nation that, through a long period of his life, ridiculed and mistrusted him; adulated leader of a Party he had educated, if not created, it seemed to his contemporaries, even more strongly than was the case respecting the Duke of Wellington, that his loss would be irreparable. But the world must needs go round, and after a while the space Lord Beaconsfield left vacant on the Front Opposition Bench in the House of Lords was occupied, and things

went on very much as they had done whilst he was yet with us. His place was not filled up, but it was occupied.

Immediately after his death it was announced, with some circumstance, that his secretary and friend had undertaken to write his memoirs. This understanding gained additional currency from a passage in Lord Beaconsfield's will, in which he bequeathed all his manuscripts and literary remains to Lord Rowton, with certain instructions about appropriating out of the proceeds, by way of personal recompense, a sum not exceeding £500. Lord Rowton never regarded this as a definite injunction to write the memoir, and, dying, left the work to other hands.

Talking the matter over with me, he told me a singular, hitherto, I think, unreported story. In the year 1872, Lord Beaconsfield commenced his last novel, "Endymion," a work undertaken chiefly from the honourable desire to obtain a sum of money that would finally wipe off a residue of monetary engagements. He worked at it pretty steadily till the General Election of 1874 called him into office, when his literary work was set aside. Still he wrote at it occasionally till the beginning of the year 1876, when the Eastern Question coming to the front and engrossing his attention, he, as he thought finally, laid the work aside. He then wrote a letter to Lord Rowton, enclosing the manuscript, unfinished by something like one hundred pages of printed matter. He stated his view that the pressure of public work would preclude his continuing the novel, and in the event of his decease he instructed Lord Rowton to finish the work, but not to volunteer the announcement that it had been left in an incomplete state, or to avow his collaboration, leaving the book to stand solely in the

name of its original creator. Lord Beaconsfield, however, living through his own Administration, and finding comparative leisure when in Opposition, completed the novel with his own hand, and it was sold for the splendid sum of £10,000, a windfall which enabled him to fulfil his cherished desire of paying off his debts.

The precise date of Benjamin Disraeli's birth is uncertain. He himself fixed it in December, 1805, but there are some authorities who place the date twelve months earlier. This uncertainty seems to have prevailed at a very early period, for when, on the 31st of July, 1817, he was baptised in the parish church of St. Andrew, Holborn, the entry in the registry book bears the curiously vague statement: "said to be about twelve years old." At this time Isaac D'Israeli, his father, lived in the King's Road, Gray's Inn, the house in which a writer in the *Quarterly Review* affirms "the wondrous boy" was born. Here again obscurity broods over fact. At least four localities claim to have been the birthplace of the great statesman. Mr. Hitchman says he was born in a house at Islington, now numbered 218, in Upper Street. The *Quarterly* reviewer clings to the King's Road; whilst Disraeli himself, when he did not affirm that he was born in Bloomsbury Square, in a house facing Hart Street, airily alluded to "a set of chambers in the Adelphi," as the place where he first saw the light of heaven.

One other and most amazing declaration on this point was made when he was contesting Shrewsbury in 1841. Addressing the electors from an open window of the Lion Hotel, he dwelt upon the immense sacrifices he had made for their sake, observing that so highly did he stand in the favour of all political parties in the borough of Wycombe that they had not only offered to

place him at the head of the poll, but also to return any second member he might name. With reference to the statement that he had gone to the poll supported by Mr. O'Connell: "Why," he exclaimed, "the borough of West Wycombe is the property of my father. There I was born, there I hope to die, and there, where everyone has known me since infancy, I do not need the recommendation of an outsider." That probably was only his fun.

Obscurity in reference to the details of Disraeli's early life extends beyond the date and locality of his birth. It touches the place where he received his education. At Shrewsbury, the home of a famous public school, Disraeli listened without contradiction to Dr. Kennedy proposing his health as "a Winchester scholar." This little misunderstanding may probably have arisen from the young candidate, asked what school he was at, replying "at Winchester." Dr. Kennedy knew only of one Winchester seminary, the great foundation school, and so introduced to the Shrewsbury boys their brother scholar from Winchester. It was really at a private boarding school, in Winchester, that Disraeli received his education. It was certainly not classical, though his friend in the *Quarterly Review* declares he "was far from being unacquainted with the works of the classic authors of Greece and Rome, and was thoroughly imbued with their spirit."

Modern languages, it is added upon this same authority, did not form part of young Disraeli's curriculum. In later years, notably at the Berlin Conference, he was at a great disadvantage by reason of his ignorance of French. That he at one time set himself to learn French appears from a letter written to his sister in 1830, when he was setting out for that voyage to the

East which illuminated his early youth. "We made the acquaintance in the packet," he writes, "of a Spanish officer, a very knowing fellow, exceedingly polished and Parisian, having long resided in France. We were introduced to him by the Captain as interpreters, being the only men on board supposed to know French. In the meantime our French improves, and perhaps he may be of use to us in Spain."

Young Benjamin was born amid moderately comfortable circumstances. His father, Isaac D'Israeli, had what to readers of to-day appears a curiously wide reputation. A leisurely scholar and a plodding writer, he produced the "Curiosities of Literature," and other volumes of the Hone Every-Day Book order. Benjamin's affection for his father was profound, and his admiration for his literary work was at least well simulated. Starting on his journey to the East he meets at Falmouth a Mr. Cornish. "You never saw such a man!" he writes to his sister. "He literally knows my father's works by heart, and thinks our revered sire the greatest man that ever lived." Again, at Gibraltar he writes to his father: "In the garrison library are all your works, even the last edition of 'The Literary Character,' in the Merchants' Library the greater part," and this statement is not intended to introduce the announcement which follows it: "each library possesses a copy of another work supposed to be written by a member of our family, and which is looked upon at Gibraltar as one of the masterpieces of the nineteenth century." This refers to "Vivian Grey."

Most of the letters on this trip to the East were written to "My dearest Father," and breathe the spirit of home affection. "Adieu, my dearest friend," is the conclusion of one; "a thousand loves to all. Write

without ceasing." Once, indeed, there is suspicion of the tongue in the cheek as he discourses on some faltering lines written by his father as the epitaph of a favourite dog.

"The epitaph," he writes, "is charming, and worthy of the better days of our poetry. Its classical simplicity, its highly artificial finish of style and fine natural burst of feeling at the end are remarkable, and what, I believe, no writer of the day could produce. It is worthy of the best things in the anthology. It is like an inscription by Sophocles translated by Pope."

Disraeli's father was of Jewish birth, or, as the son put it, was "an Italian, descendant from one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula in the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the more tolerant atmosphere of the Venetian Republic." The family, though not opulent, were at least in affluent circumstances. The grandfather, a merchant, left behind him possessions that gave his son Isaac £3,000 a year and full opportunity of pursuing those literary studies he loved so well. Isaac D'Israeli at the time of the birth of his son belonged to the Portuguese Synagogue in Bevis Marks. In 1817, the very year when Benjamin, "said to be about twelve years old," was received into the Christian Church, Isaac D'Israeli, quarrelling with the authorities of the synagogue, formally withdrew from the congregation. In the meantime, little Benjamin had been initiated into the covenant of Abraham.

He seems to have left school early, and went into business in the office of a firm of attorneys, situated in Frederick Place, Old Jewry. He probably liked this as little as Charles Dickens loved the blacking-pot business to which he was early apprenticed. Unlike

Dickens, Disraeli never told the story of the period of life when he was merging from boyhood into youth. The earliest record—and that merely incidental—is found in the charming little volume of "Home Letters," published on the fourth anniversary of his death by his brother Ralph.

In 1826, when Disraeli was just of age, appeared "Vivian Grey," a book which, forty-four years later, he himself described as "essentially a puerile work, that has baffled even the efforts of its author to suppress it." That was not the view of its contemporaries, nor is it of those who still read it in these later days. It straightway made the author famous, and opened to him those gilded saloons, and the company of those wits and people of fashion whom he had evolved from his inner consciousness whilst yet he lived and wrote in his father's house in the Gray's Inn Road. It was not till 1827, the year following the publication of "Vivian Grey," that Isaac D'Israeli removed with his family to Bloomsbury Square, a locality then greatly frequented by judges, and what Disraeli in later House of Commons days used sonorously to allude to as "gentlemen of the long robe." Speaking of "Vivian Grey," the writer in the *Quarterly Review* says:—

"The fashionable world which he attempts to picture was not then open to him, and his experience of life and manners must have been confined to his family circle, and to that of the Austens, and to the late Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street, with whom he was on terms of the most intimate friendship, in which, though he met many eminent literary men, he was not likely to learn much of the language and habits of Mayfair."

The journey to the East in company with Mr. Meredith,

described in the "Home Letters," was not young Disraeli's first acquaintance with the Continent. Immediately after the publication of "Vivian Grey," on the 4th of August, 1826, he set out, the guest of his friends Mr. and Mrs. Austen in their travelling carriage, on a tour through France and Italy. At Geneva, where memories of Byron were still fresh, the young man gleaned with avidity all he could learn about the poet, with whom he fancied he had much in common. He made the acquaintance of Tita, the body-servant in whose arms Byron died. When, later, Disraeli set out for the East, he engaged him to be his valet as he had been Lord Byron's. "Such a valet!" he writes from Malta in 1830. "Byron died in his arms, and his moustachios touch the earth; withal as mild as a lamb, though he has two daggers always about his person." Tita died many years later, holding the honourable appointment of a messenger at the India Office, procured for him at his old master's intervention.

In addition to the house in Bloomsbury Square, Isaac D'Israeli had about this time a little country place at Fyfield, in Oxfordshire, which he occupied before permanently settling at Bradenham House, in Buckinghamshire, where he lived for the rest of his life, and whither presently, his son was able to bring eminent persons like Lord Lyndhurst to stay for a while. At Fyfield and Bradenham Hall young Disraeli lived, apart from the giddy world, for nearly four years, hard at work in journalism and literature. Here he wrote "The Young Duke," his second novel.

Bradenham is situated within a comfortable walk of Hughenden. When, in later years, Disraeli lived at the latter place in such retirement as was permitted to one of the foremost statesmen in Europe, he was fond

of walking over to Bradenham with the intimate companion of his later years, wandering about the scenes of his early manhood, and recalling the associations of the place. From Fyfield and Bradenham days he ever liked the notion of having a rural retreat; but he did not find that keen and abiding delight in country life which is given to some men. It was a change, a rest from incessant town labour. Moreover, to retire to the country at certain periods of the year was the proper thing for an English gentleman to do. Even in the accessories of country life Disraeli's Oriental taste prevailed. He preferred dahlias to daisies, peacocks to robin-redbreasts. In the last year peacocks were always on the lawn at Hughenden. Lord Beaconsfield delighted to watch them majestically spread their tails and stalk across the landscape.

The fable which has connected his name with the primrose would much have amused him had he lived to learn it. The only remembered observation he offered with respect to primroses was that they made an excellent salad. The origin of the story is well known. I have heard it confirmed by a gentleman whose intimate connection with the Court at the time placed him in a position to know the facts. When Lord Beaconsfield was borne to the grave there lay prominent on the coffin a wreath of primroses, bearing the inscription: "His favourite flower," signed with the autograph initials of the Queen. It was naturally assumed that the personal pronoun related to the dead statesman, and the story noised abroad that the primrose was Lord Beaconsfield's favourite flower was, from the startling incongruity of the association, hailed with pleasure. The truth is, that when the Queen wrote the inscription, she had in her mind the Prince Consort, and desired to offer

on the bier of her friend, the dead statesman, the cherished floral gift connected with her unforgotten husband.

Lord Beaconsfield was wont in later days frankly to declare that he "liked trees better than flowers," a preference, it is suggested by one who knew him best, not unconnected with the circumstance that he could see trees, whilst to his fading eyesight flowers were but a patch of blurred colour. During the last years of his life he was often sadly conscious of his infirmity, and deeply regretted the occasional pain he involuntarily gave. He was constantly, though all unconsciously, "cutting" people whom, if he could have recognised them, he would have been delighted to salute or to speak with. Lord Rowton, his companion in his walks and drives, was always on the *qui vive* to advise him of the approach of friends or acquaintances. Once this arrangement led to comical consequences. Walking out one day they met the Prince of Wales approaching, and Lord Beaconsfield was duly informed of his approach. Close by his Royal Highness walked a commissionaire speeding on an errand, and to him Lord Beaconsfield, raising his hat, bowed with courtly grace, the Prince passing unobserved.

At the Bloomsbury Square epoch D'Israeli the younger, as he was then styled, seems to have been in a state of health that caused great anxiety both to himself and his friends. In November, 1829, he writes that he is "desperately ill." At one time his life appears to have been despaired of. In a letter to Mrs. Austen, dated from Bradenham House, 7th of March, 1830 (quoted in the *Quarterly Review*), he says of himself, that he cannot be worse; that of all places London was the one least suited to him, and that

solitude and silence do not make his existence easy; they only make it endurable.

"My plans about leaving England are more unsettled than ever. I anticipate no benefit from it, nor from anything else, but I am desirous of quitting England, that I may lead even a more recluse life than I do at present, and emancipate myself from perpetual commiseration. When I was in town last I consulted many eminent men. I received from them no consolation. I grieve to say my hair grows very badly, and, I think, more gray, which I can unfeignedly declare occasions me more anguish than even the prospect of death."

Later on he described himself as being in a constant state of stupor, and unable to write a line without the greatest effort. He passed a whole week in a sort of trance, sleeping daily sixteen out of twenty-four hours. He complained of giddiness in the head, and palpitation of the heart. He had, he said, given up all idea of the East, and doubted whether, even if the opportunity offered, he would have the strength and spirit to avail himself of it; and he ends his letter by begging his correspondent to consider him his "deceased, though sincere friend."

Mr. Austen insisted upon his carrying out his cherished desire of visiting the East. It is more than probable that he provided the necessary funds, which considering the style in which his young friend travelled, must have reached a formidable sum. He seems to have set sail for Gibraltar from London. However it be, the first of the "home letters," addressed to "my dear Sa" (his sister Sarah), is dated from the Royal Hotel, Falmouth, June 1st, 1830, and announces "our arrival here this morning at four o'clock, instead of Sunday, having had a very rough passage indeed, the wind ahead the whole

time." He was accompanied by Mr. Meredith, a gentleman engaged to be married to "my dear Sa," who died at Cairo on the return journey.

The account of this expedition is given in the "Home Letters," a charming narrative, in literary style perhaps the best work from his pen, being free from later habits of affectation. The letters showed Disraeli at his best—gay, audacious, popular, with a fine conceit of himself, and endowed with a keen eye for beauty of scenery or phases of character. Throughout the journey the mysterious illness which beset him is frequently alluded to. From Gibraltar he writes:—

"The air of the mountains, the rising sun, the rising appetite, the variety of picturesque persons and things we met, and the impending danger, made a delightful life; and had it not been for the great enemy, I should have given myself up entirely to the magic of the life—but that spoiled all. It is not worse—sometimes I think it lighter about the head—but the palpitation about the heart greatly increases. Otherwise my health is wonderful. Never have I been better; but what use is this when the end of all existence is debarred me? I say no more upon this melancholy subject, by which I am ever and infinitely depressed, and often most so when the world least imagines it; but to complain is useless, and to endure almost impossible; but existence is certainly less irksome in the mild distraction of this varied life."

Three months later he writes from Corfu:—

"I continue much the same—still infirm, but no longer destitute of hope. I wander in pursuit of health, like the immortal exile in pursuit of the lost shore which is now almost glittering in my sight. Five years of my life have been already wasted, and sometimes I think my pilgrimage may be as long as that of Ulysses."

Writing from Cairo of the illness of his friend Meredith and of Tita, he says: "thus you see, the strong men have all fallen, while I who am a habitual invalid am firm on my legs." But he had benefited by his trip and began that convalescence which finally saw the complete extinction of the enemy. "I cannot write to say I am quite well," he reports from Cairo, on the 28th of May, 1831, "because the enemy still holds out, but I am sanguine, very, and at any rate quite well enough to wish to be at home."

He had, in truth, long been homesick, and whilst crossing the Ægean Sea, he dropped into poetry. His verse is not nearly so good as his prose, but is worth quoting, partly, as a curious sample of his literary work, principally as showing him in that homely character unfamiliar to those of a later generation, who knew him as "The Asian Mystery," the political adventurer, the imperturbable statesman :—

"Bright are the skies above me,
And blue the waters roll;
Ah! if but those that love me
Were here, my joy were whole.
When those we love are wanting,
Then o'er the clouded heart
A thousand visions haunting,
Their darkening shadows dart.

Wild bird that fliest so lightly,
Ah, whither dost thou roam?
Thou art a wanderer rightly,
Thou hast not left thy home.
For thou, altho' thou art nestless,
Art not so lone as he
Whose spirit, sad and restless,
Impels him o'er thy sea."

In this little volume, Disraeli, writing in the frankness and freedom of home conversation, sketches off a good

many people, not least successfully himself. Here he is at Gibraltar rejoicing in the possession of a set of studs the gift of his mother, which were probably very large and fine :—

"It fortuitously happens to be the fashion among the dandies of Gibraltar not to wear waistcoats in the morning; so tell my mother that her new studs come into fine play, and maintain my reputation of being a great judge of costume and the envy and admiration of many subalterns."

Also, the young visitor from London is an adept in the nice conduct of the clouded cane.

"I have," he tells his father, "the fame of being the first who ever passed the Straits with two canes, a morning and an evening cane. I change my cane as the gun fires, and hope to carry them both on to Cairo. It is wonderful the effect these magical wands produce."

Arrived at Malta, his mother's studs have lost their pristine charm, and the evening and the morning cane no longer make a day for him.

"You should see me," he writes to brother Ralph, "in the costume of a Greek pirate, a blood-red shirt with silver studs as big as shillings, an immense scarf for girdle, full of pistols and daggers, red cap, red slippers, broad, blue-striped jacket and trousers.

What a priceless addition to a portrait gallery would be a finished picture of the sketch here lightly but graphically filled in.

Beneath all his frivolities and vanities there was, even at this early age, a fixed purpose about the glittering youth.

"To govern men," he writes in another letter from Malta, "you must either excel them in their accomplishments or despise them. Clay does one, I do the other,

and we are both equally popular. Affectation tells here even better than wit."

Then there follows a story, interesting as showing how little it took to amuse Malta.

"Yesterday at the racket court, sitting in the gallery among strangers, the ball entered and lightly struck me, and fell at my feet. I picked it up, and observing a young rifleman excessively stiff, I humbly requested him to forward its passage into the court, as I really had never thrown a ball in my life. This incident has been the general subject of conversation at all the messes to-day!"

The next day, having had an interview with the Governor, which he believed had been a success, "I jumped up, remembering that I must be breaking into his morning, and was off, making it a rule always to leave with a good impression." There was evidently a method in the young man's madness of affectation and occasional buffoonery.

His high spirits, his sense of humour, and his audacity, not to call it impudence, are illustrated in an account he gives of an incident in his journey through Albania. The light and rapid touch illustrates the admirable literary style of these letters already noted:—

"This khan had now been turned into a military post, and here we found a young Bey, to whom Kalio had given us a letter, in case of our stopping for an hour. He was a man of very pleasing exterior, but unluckily could not understand Giovanni's Greek, and had no interpreter. What was to be done? We could not go on, as there was not an inhabited place before Yanina; and here were we, sitting before sunset on the same divan with our host, who had entered the place to receive us, and would not leave the room while we were

there, without the power of communicating an idea. We were in despair, and we were also very hungry, and could not therefore in the course of an hour or two plead fatigue as an excuse for sleep, for we were ravenous and anxious to know what prospect of food existed in this wild and desolate mansion. So we smoked. It is a great resource, but this wore out, and it was so ludicrous smoking, and looking at each other, and dying to talk, and then exchanging pipes by way of compliment, and then pressing our hand to our heart by way of thanks.

"The Bey sat in the corner, I unfortunately next, so I had the onus of mute attention, and Clay next to me; so he and M. could at least have an occasional joke, though, of course, we were too well-bred to exceed an occasional and irresistible observation. Clay wanted to play écarté, and with a grave face, as if we were at our devotions; but just as we were about commencing it occurred to us that we had some brandy, and that we should offer our host a glass, as it might be a hint for what should follow to so vehement a schnaps. Mashallah! Had the effect only taken place 1,830 years ago, instead of in the present age of scepticism, it would have been instantly voted a first-rate miracle. Our mild friend smacked his lips and instantly asked for another cup—we drank it in coffee cups. By the time that Meredith had returned, who had left the house on pretence of shooting, Clay, our host, and myself, had despatched a bottle of brandy in quicker time and fairer proportions than I ever did a bottle of Burgundy, and were extremely gay. Then he would drink again with Meredith, and ordered some figs, talking, I must tell you, all the time, indulging in the most graceful pantomime, examining our pistols, offering us his own golden ones for our inspection, and finally making out Giovanni's

Greek enough to misunderstand most ludicrously every observation we communicated. But all was taken in good part, and I never met such a jolly fellow in the course of my life.

"In the meantime we were ravenous, for the dry, round, unsugary fig is a great whetter. At last we insisted upon Giovanni's communicating our wants, and asking for bread. The Bey gravely bowed, and said, 'Leave it to me, take no thought,' and nothing more occurred. We prepared ourselves for hungry dreams, when, to our great delight, a most capital supper was brought in, accompanied, to our great horror, by wine. We ate, we drank; we ate with our fingers, we drank in a manner I never recollect. The wine was not bad, but if it had been poison we must drink; it was such a compliment for a Moslemin; we quaffed it in rivers. The Bey called for the brandy; he drank it all. The room turned round; the wild attendants who sat at our feet seemed dancing in strange and fantastic whirls; the Bey shook hands with me; he shouted English, I Greek. 'Very good!' he had caught up from us; 'Kalo, kalo!' was my rejoinder. He roared; I smacked him on the back. I remember no more.

"In the middle of the night I woke. I found myself sleeping on the divan, rolled up in its sacred carpet; the Bey had wisely reeled to the fire. The thirst I felt was like that of Dives. All were sleeping except two, who kept up during the night the great wood fire. I rose lightly, stepping over my sleeping companions, and the shining arms that here and there informed me that the dark mass wrapped up in a capote was a human being. I found Abraham's bosom in a flagon of water. I think I must have drunk a gallon at one draught. I looked at the wood fire and thought of the blazing blocks in the

hall at Bradenham, asked myself whether I was indeed in the mountain fastness of an Albanian chief, and, shrugging my shoulders, went to bed and woke without a headache. We left our jolly host in regret. I gave him my pipe as a memorial of our having got tipsy together."

Disraeli had adventures of another kind in Spain, once "escaping the brigands only by a moonlight scamper and a change of route," another time being nearly shot by an escort of a caravan, who mistook him and his party for brigands. A month or two later, instead of going to Egypt as was his ordered intention, he proceeded to Corfu, in pursuance of a plan of joining the Turkish Army as a volunteer. Albania was in revolt, the Grand Vizier, Reschid Pasha, was in personal command of the Turkish forces, and Disraeli, fired with recollection of Byron's military expedition, seriously resolved to volunteer. There was this important distinction between his action and Lord Byron's, that, whilst the poet went to the help of a nation struggling to be free, Disraeli was drawn to throw his pistols and daggers, his red cap, his red slippers, and his silver studs, into the scale on the side of the enslaver.

He mentions the project twice, once in a letter to the gentleman known as Edward Bulwer, and once to his friend and confidante, Mrs. Austen. He made that lady's flesh creep by the following dark sayings:—

"With regard to myself I have certainly made great progress, but not enough. I have still illness to make my life a burden, and, as my great friend, the sun, is daily becoming less powerful, I daily grow more dispirited, and resume my old style of despair. Had I been cured by this time I had made up my mind to join you in Italy. As it is, I go I know not where, but do

not be surprised if you hear something very strange indeed."

In a succeeding letter, written from Corfu, he discloses his intention of going to the assistance of the Turkish Army; a project finally abandoned on learning that the Porte had proceeded with such surprising energy that "the war in Albania which had begun so magnificently has already dwindled into an insurrection."

Another, and scarcely less startling scheme for disposing of his spare time which suggested itself to the restless fancy of Disraeli was that he should become a publisher. Grenville writes in his Memoirs: "Moxon told me on Wednesday that some years ago Disraeli had asked him to take him into partnership. But he refused, not thinking he was sufficiently prudent to be trusted."

Possibly Mr. Moxon had in mind John Murray's business connection with the brilliant young man and its calamities. It is amongst the least familiar facts in the early history of Disraeli that he was the founder and editor of a newspaper. It was called *The Representative*, its publisher and proprietor being John Murray, who had determined to "put down *The Times*." I have found in an old number of the *London Magazine* some interesting particulars of this adventure. It is called "The Private History of the Rise and Fall of a Newspaper," and is evidently written by one who had intimate relations with its staff. The first number of the *Representative* appeared on January 5th, 1826, with an intimation that "the title of the paper was chosen, since it was intended to present, as in the bright reflection of a mirror, an image as faithful, as brilliant, of the political events, the literature and the manner of the present times." But it did not realise this modest

anticipation, and certainly did not succeed in its original design of putting down the *Times*. It lasted only a few months, John Murray having in the meantime had a hot quarrel with his oiled and curled young editor.

The climax of enjoyment in this first journey to the East was reached by young Disraeli when he beheld the cupolas and minarets of Stamboul rising before him at sunset, and "felt an excitement which," *etât.* 25, he "thought was dead." Writing to Edward Bulwer, he says:—

"I confess to you that my Turkish prejudices are very much confirmed by my residence in Turkey. The life of this people greatly accords to my taste. To repose on voluptuous divans and smoke superb pipes; daily to indulge in the luxuries of a bath which requires half a dozen attendants for its perfection; to court the air in a carved caique, by shores which are a perpetual scene, and to find no exertion greater than a canter on a barb; this is, I think, a far more sensible life than the bustle of clubs, all the boring of drawing-rooms, and all the coarse vulgarity of our political controversies."

He seems to have made up his mind to be a Turk, and went so far as to wear a turban, add many lengths to his pipe, and practise sitting on a divan. One Mehemet Pacha quite won his heart by telling him he could not be an Englishman, but was rather one of Eastern race, "because he walked so slowly." Those who knew him half a century later will remember how this peculiarity marked him to the last. There were few things in a small way more impressive in the House of Commons than to witness Disraeli's approach to the table after returning from the Division Lobby. With head slightly bent, he glided with long, slow stride down the very centre of the floor, bowing with stately grace

to the Speaker. Whether coming in after a crushing defeat or returning after an important victory, he never varied his measured gait, the more remarkable among the hurrying throng after a division.

In degrees the same peculiarity was noticeable out of doors. I find this note in my diary written after walking behind him up Parliament Street, one afternoon at the beginning of 1878: "Taken at a back view it would not be thought he was a very old man. He was smartly dressed in a coat new as the year. In gracious recognition of a spring day that had strayed into winter weather the garment was of light grey, with trousers to match. A blue necktie and lavender kid gloves—over which mittens were drawn, since it was not yet quite spring—completed an attire remarkable on any person on this particular day. But the wearer was himself a notable man. He walked erect with a certain swinging pace. His progress was slow, and there was a curious hesitation about lifting his feet, which suggested that his boots were soled with lead. Then his face was very old, leaden in hue, with deeply furrowed lines by the side of his mouth, which was adorned by a little patch of hair, supernaturally black, just covering the portion of his upper lip immediately under the nostrils, like an 'imperial' transplanted. He was evidently engrossed in deepest thought, regarding passing events with lack-lustre eyes, and with a mind that was far away. Many people who passed raised their hats in salutation. Sometimes when he caught the motion he mechanically bent his head in acknowledgment; but oftener he did not see, and walked steadily on."

Reference is made in his night's adventure with the bibulous Bey of gift to his host of his pipe. At this

period of life the pipe was a constant companion and figures largely in his correspondence.

"I have," he writes from Cairo, "become a most accomplished smoker; carrying the luxurious art to a pitch of refinement of which Ralph has no idea. My pipe is cooled in a wet silken bag, my coffee is boiled with spices, and I finish my last chibouque with a sherbert and pomegranate."

At Smyrna he ascribes to the fine weather and to smoking the continued improvement of his health. From Athens he declares that he does not care for privations in respect of food, "as I have always got my pipe."

More than twenty years before his death the pipe, cherished companion of his blooming youth, was laid aside. Occasionally, in certain company, he would smoke a cigar, but did not particularly care for it. He brought home the pipes which figure so prominently in his correspondence from the East, and one day presented them to Lord Rowton, who to the end kept them among his most treasured relics. It is characteristic of Disraeli that he christened his pipes in magniloquent fashion. One he called "Bosphorus," and the other "Sultan," as if they were ironclad line-of-battle ships. The stems were fully eight feet long, made of wood covered with fluted silk, gorgeous to behold when young Disraeli sat on his divan, sipped his spiced coffee and toyed with the sherbert of pomegranate. When Lord Rowton showed them to me in his room in Berkeley Square they were woefully faded, the heavy amber mouthpieces cracked and chipped, and the inadequately small bowl, which looked more like ordinary clay than the porcelain Disraeli's fancy pictured, had lost some of its fittings.

Sherbert and coffee were only occasional distractions at this epoch of Eastern travel, for then, and to the end of his life, Disraeli's favourite drink was Burgundy. Contemplating making an important speech he liked to linger over a bottle of Burgundy. Dining nearly forty years later with Sir Charles Burrell, he incidentally mentions a duke or two among the guests, and adds, "the best guests, however, were turtle, whitebait, venison and Burgundy."

Disraeli returned to England in the summer of 1831, his health greatly improved. "I am in a famous condition," he writes on the day after his arrival; "indeed better than I ever was in my life, full of hope and courage." He set to work on "Contarini Fleming" in which he utilised his travel lore, and worked up, without improving, some of the passages which after many years saw the light in the "Home Letters." He was now a person of consequence, a favourite in society, where he was petted by the ladies and somewhat uneasily laughed at by the men. The Countess of Blessington took him up, and at her house one evening N. P. Willis, the American letter-writer, found him and thus described him:—

"Disraeli had arrived before me, and sat in the deep window, looking out upon Hyde Park, with the last rays of daylight reflected from the gorgeous gold flowers of a splendidly embroidered waistcoat. Patent leather pumps, a white stick, with a black cord and tassel, and a quantity of chains about his neck and pockets, served to make him, even in the dim light, a conspicuous object. Disraeli has one of the most remarkable faces I ever saw. He is lividly pale, and but for the energy of his action and the strength of his lungs, would seem to be a victim to consumption. His eye is as black as

Erebus, and has the most mocking, lying-in-wait sort of expression conceivable. His mouth is alive with a kind of working and impatient nervousness and when he has burst forth, as he does constantly, with a particularly successful cataract of expression, it assumes a curl of triumphant scorn that would be worthy of a Mephistopheles. His hair is as extraordinary as his taste in waistcoats. A thick heavy mass of jet-black ringlets falls over his left cheek almost to his collarless stock, while on the right temple it is parted and put away with the smooth carefulness of a girl's and shines most unctuously—

"'With thy incomparable oil, Macassar!'"

Jefferson, a later writer, adds a no less graphic picture:—

"He was," he writes, "an egregious dandy. Foppery, to an extreme of extravagance, was the mode with lads thirty years ago, but he outstripped every one of his competitors in personal adornment. At this day, matrons of fashion often recall the graces, the separate trappings, and the entire appearance of Disraeli the younger as he made his first essay in the great world—his ringlets of silken black hair, his flashing eyes, his effeminate air and lisping voice, his dress coat of black velvet lined with white satin, his white kid gloves, with his wrist surmounted by a long hanging fringe of black silk, and his ivory cane, of which the handle, inlaid with gold, was relieved by more black silk in the shape of a tassel."

The correspondence of John Lothrop Motley incidentally furnishes another not less striking description of Disraeli's personal appearance at this epoch. It is drawn by Lady Dufferin, mother of the Marquis of

Dufferin and Ava, who thus describes the author of "Vivian Grey," whom she met at a dinner-party :—

"He wore a black velvet coat lined with satin, purple trousers with a gold band running down the outside seam, a scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles falling down to the tips of his fingers, white gloves with several brilliant rings outside them, and long black ringlets rippling down upon his shoulders."

Mr. Motley adds :—

"It seemed impossible that such a Guy Fawkes could have been tolerated in any society. This audacity, which has proved more perennial than brass, was always the solid foundation of his character. Lady Dufferin told him, however, that he made a fool of himself by appearing in such fantastic shape, and he afterwards modified his costume, but he was never to be put down."

Mr. Willis supplements his sketch of Disraeli's personal appearance with a description of his power of conversation which shows the impression he made upon a casual observer :—

"I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which he clothed his description. There were at least five words in every sentence that must have been very much astonished at the use they were put to; and yet no others apparently could so well have conveyed his idea. He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post, every muscle in action, and the utmost energy of expression flung out into every burst."

In a supplementary volume of letters addressed to "My dear Sa," but widely differing from those of the 1830 epoch, Disraeli charms his sister with off-hand

references to the high circles in which he moved. On the 18th February, 1832, he writes :—

"We had a very brilliant reunion at Bulwer's last night. Among the notables were Lords Strangford and Mulgrave with the latter of whom I had a great deal of conversation; Count D'Orsay the famous Parisian dandy; there was a large sprinkling of blues—Lady Morgan, Mrs. Norton, L.E.L., etc. Bulwer came up to me and said, 'There is one blue who insists upon an introduction,' 'Oh, my dear fellow, I cannot really, the power of repartee has deserted me.' 'I have pledged myself, you must come'; so he led me up to a very sumptuous personage, looking like a full-blown rose—Mrs. Gore. I avoided L.E.L., who looked the very personification of Brompton, pink satin dress and white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and her hair à la Sappho."

His head was swimming with vanity and conceit. One May night in 1832 he dines at Elliott's "a male party consisting of eight." He cannot be bored to mention the names of the whole eight, but Peel was certainly there and was most gracious.

"He is a very great man, indeed, and they all seem afraid of him. I can easily conceive that he could be very disagreeable, but yesterday he was in most condescending mood, and unbent with becoming haughtiness. I reminded him by my dignified familiarity both that he was ex-Minister and I a present Radical."

Visiting the House of Commons on the 7th of February, 1833 :—

"I heard Macaulay's best speech, Sheil and Charles Grant. Macaulay admirable, but between ourselves I could floor them all. This *entre nous;* I was never more confident of anything than that I could carry

everything before me in that House. The time will come."

The political field was not the only one where the now middle-aged youth was, in his own opinion, supreme. Writing from Southend, February 15th, 1834, he says :—

"I hunted the other part with Sir Henry Smyth's hounds, and, although not in pink, was the best mounted man in the field, riding an Arabian mare which I nearly killed. A run of thirty miles and I stopped at nothing."

June 19th, 1834 :—

"To-night I am going to the Duchess of Hamilton's. I have had great successes in Society this year. I am as popular with the dandies as I am hated by the second-rate men. I make my way easily in the highest set where there is no envy, malice, etc., and where they like to admire and be amused."

November 4th, 1834 :—

"I saw Chandos (afterwards Duke of Buckingham) to-day, and I had a long conversation with him on politics. He has no head, but I flatter myself I opened his mind a little."

Towards the end of 1835 he gets into controversy with the *Globe*, which tartly reviewed "A Vindication of the English Constitution," Disraeli had modestly published. He replied to the strictures of the *Globe* in the columns of the *Times*, on which he writes to his sister :—

"The letters to the *Times* have made a great sensation. I am the first individual who has silenced the press with its own weapons. The *Chronicle* is quite silent. The writers in the paper are known, and they absolutely fear being shown up by me."

In February, 1839, being then a member of the House of Commons, and having already made his mark, he writes :—

"I dined at Peel's, and came late, having mistaken the hour. I found some twenty-five gentlemen grubbing in solemn silence. I threw a shot over the table, set them going, and in time they became even noisy."

It is the same in the House of Commons :—

"Never heard a more entertaining debate (February 28th, 1839). Duncan's drollery inimitable. Though I had not intended to speak and had not even my notes in my pocket he animated me, and though full figged in costume, I rose with several men at the same time. But the House called for me, and I spoke with great effect amid loud cheering and laughter. Supposed to have settled question."

He created an immense sensation on accompanying other members of the House of Commons to present an address to the Queen on her marriage. "As a whole the House was very brilliant in costume, but it was generally agreed that I am never to wear any other but a court costume, being, according to Ossulston, a very Charles the Second."

The ceremonies in connection with the Queen's ascension to the Throne were not without personal embarrassment to Disraeli. It was all very well to say that he must never wear anything but a court dress, but a court dress usually includes trousers, and "On going to the Coronation in a uniform that involved the wearing of shorts and stockings, it turned out that I had a very fine leg, which I never knew before."

Perhaps one of Disraeli's greatest triumphs of personal charm and fascination was gained over Louis XVIII., whom he visited at the Tuileries at the end of 1824.

So complete was his triumph that other people were somewhat inconvenienced.

"I was the only stranger among sixty guests. Dinner was immediately announced, the King leading out the Queen of Sardinia, and there were so many ladies that an Italian princess, duchess or countess fell to my share. We dined in the Gallery of Diana, one of the *chefs d'œuvre* of Louis XVI. In the evening the King personally showed the Tuileries to the Queen of Sardinia, and the first lady-in-waiting invited me and so did the King to join the party, *only eight.* It is rare to make the tour of a palace with a king for the cicerone. In the evening there was a reception of a few individuals, but I should have withdrawn had not the King addressed me and maintained a long conversation. He walked into an adjoining room, and motioned to me to seat myself on the same sofa. While we conversed, the chamberlain occasionally entered and announced guests. 'S. A. le Prince de Ligne,' the new ambassador of Belgium. 'J'arrive,' responded his majesty very impatiently, but he never moved. At last even majesty was obliged to move, but he signified his wish that I should attend the palace in the evenings. I am the *only* stranger who has been received at Court. There is no Court at present, on account of the death of the Duke of Orleans; and the Ailesburys, Stanhopes, and Russian princes cannot obtain a reception. The King speaks of me to many with great kudos."[1]

But these were the frivolities of youth, the froth beaten up by an active mind and a brilliant fancy. When Disraeli entered the House of Commons as a stranger, and instinctively compared his capabilities with

[1] The italics here and elsewhere in quotations from the correspondence are the ardent letter-writer's.

the seasoned efforts of older men, he was very serious indeed, and felt that "the time would come." He had always looked to the House of Commons as the proper field for his energies and talents, and in the midsummer of 1832 made his first essay at Wycombe. At this period, being, as Charles Greville wrote of him two years later, "a mighty impartial personage," he had, upon full consideration of the circumstances of the hour and place, determined to present himself to the electors of Wycombe under the Radical banner.

At a subsequent period not far distant the young politician formally came out as a Tory, a party with which to the day of his death his fortunes were united. This circumstance has led to some controversy as to his precise position when he first wooed the suffrages of Wycombe. All doubt on this point is disposed of by a letter addressed to Mr. Austen, published for the first time in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1889.

"I have just received a despatch from Wycombe," Disraeli writes, "informing me that the crisis has commenced. I must go down, declare and canvass. Baring is my opponent. . . I start on the high Radical interest, and take down strong recommendatory epistles from O'Connell, Hume, Burdett, and *hoc genus*. Toryism is worn out, and I cannot condescend to be a Whig."

The recommendatory epistles were plain enough. O'Connell warmly upholds the candidate, "convinced of the great advantages the cause of genuine reform would obtain from his return." Joseph Hume writes :—

"I hope the Reformers will rally round you who entertain Liberal opinions in every branch of Government and are prepared to pledge yourself to support Reform and Economy in every department."

There was a lively canvass and an agitated polling,

the result of which reads like an anti-climax. At the close of the poll Colonel Grey had twenty-three votes, Disraeli twelve. It is gravely added, "there were two more to poll in the Grey interest."

In the official statement of the poll, in the letters of O'Connell and Hume, the name of the candidate for Wycombe is spelt D'Israeli. At this time, as letters *passim* show, the son of Isaac D'Israeli had adopted the less Jewish form of orthography which he subsequently made famous. In a letter to his sister, dated the 7th of April, 1832, he complacently quotes a couplet from the *Omnibus*, a cheap literary satirical paper of the day, which gives an alphabetical poetical list of authors :—

> "*I* is Israeli, a man of great gumption,
> To leave out the *D* is a piece of assumption."

In August, 1832, Parliament was dissolved, and on the 1st of October in the same year, Benjamin Disraeli, dating from Bradenham House, issued a new address to the electors of Wycombe. It is noteworthy that in this evidently well-considered and admirably written declaration of political faith, the candidate declared for the ballot, for triennial Parliaments, for cheap education, for retrenchment, for the improvement of the condition of the working classes, and, generally, for reform. The concluding paragraph strikes with curious fidelity the note of another appeal to the electors put forth forty years later under vastly different circumstances. Here we have the ring of the famous letter addressed by Disraeli on the eve of the Bath election in 1873 to Lord Grey de Wilton, in which Gladstone's Ministry is described as having "harassed every trade, worried every profession, assailed or menaced every class institution and species of property in the country.'

This address to the dead and gone electors of Wycombe in 1832 is also notable for its foreshadowing of the "Unionist Party," which Disraeli did not live long enough to see in actual being.

"Rouse yourselves in the hour of doubt and danger," the young man cried aloud to the slumbering constituency. "Rid yourselves of all the political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory, and unite in forming a great national party which can alone save the country from impending destruction."

There were three candidates at this election. Disraeli again found himself at the bottom of the poll. He tried Wycombe a third time and was once more defeated. Speaking a fortnight later at a public dinner he let fall one of those strangely prophetic sentences which glitter through the record of his life.

"I do not," he said, "in any way feel like a beaten man. Perhaps it is because I am used to it. I can say with the famous Italian general who, being asked in his old age why he was always victorious, replied that it was because he had always been beaten in youth."

In 1835 Disraeli, always ready for a fight, unsuccessfully stood for Taunton in opposition to Mr. Henry Labouchere (later Lord Taunton), who offered himself for re-election on being appointed Master of the Mint in the Government of Lord Melbourne. By this time he had reconsidered his position, and came forward as a Tory candidate supported, if current rumours were true, by funds from the Conservative Club. "Is he making a cat's-paw of the Tories, or are they making one of him?" asked the mystified *Morning Chronicle.*

This election contest was memorable as incidentally leading to his quarrel with O'Connell, whom he challenged to a duel. Disraeli's own account of this

episode is given in a letter to his sister dated May 6th, 1835:—

"I did not know yesterday when I wrote of the attack of O'Connell; it has engaged me ever since. I send you the *Times* and *Morning Post*. There is but one opinion among *all* parties, viz., that I have *squabashed* them. I went to D'Orsay immediately. He sent for Henry Baillie for my second, as he thought a foreigner should not interfere in a political duel; but he took the management of everything. I never quitted his house till ten o'clock, when I dressed and went to the opera, and every one says I have done it in first-rate style."

In 1837 Disraeli's undaunted efforts were crowned with success, and he was returned to the House of Commons as member for Maidstone. The address to the electors, issued at Maidstone, dated 1st of May, 1837, differs considerably from that addressed to the electors of High Wycombe in 1832. Disraeli now solicits "your suffrages as an uncompromising adherent to that ancient Constitution which was once the boast of our fathers, and is still the blessing of their children." He stood as the colleague of Mr. Wyndham Lewis, husband of the lady who subsequently became his wife.

The polling at Maidstone took place on the 27th of July, 1837. Parliament was opened by the Queen in person on the 20th of November, and seventeen days later Disraeli made his maiden speech amid circumstances familiar to every reader. In a letter to his sister is found the young Member's own account of a scene described a score of times by other hands. Writing on the morning after the event, Disraeli says:—

"I made my maiden speech last night, rising very late

after O'Connell, but at the request of my party and with the full sanction of Sir Robert Peel. As I wish to give you an *exact* idea of what occurred, I state at once that my *début* was a *failure*, so far that I could not succeed in gaining an opportunity of saying what I intended; but the failure was not occasioned by my breaking down, or any incompetency on my part, but from the physical powers of my adversaries. I can give you no idea how bitter, how factious, how unfair they were. It was like my first *début* at Aylesbury, and perhaps in that sense may be auspicious of ultimate triumph in the same scene. I fought through all with undaunted pluck and unruffled temper, made occasionally good isolated hits when there was silence, and finished with spirit when I found a formal display was ineffectual. My party backed me well, and no one with more zeal and kindness than Peel, cheering me repeatedly, which is not his custom. The uproar was all organised by the Radicals and Repealers. They formed a compact body near the Bar of the House, and seemed determined to set me down; but that they did not do. I have given you a most impartial account, stated, indeed, against myself."

In this same letter he fills in a hiatus that stands in all the printed reports of the historic speech.

"When we remember," the report lamely runs, "at the same time that, with emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, on the one hand a triumphant nation, on the other a groaning people, and, notwithstanding, the noble lord secure on a pedestal of power, may wield in one hand the keys of St. Peter and——."

Here the reporter notes—"The honourable Member was interrupted with such loud and incessant bursts of laughter that it was impossible to know whether he

really closed his sentence or not." There was, it appears, much curiosity in the House as to how this sentence should have finished. The Attorney-General, meeting the unabashed young orator in the Lobby, asked him what was the antithesis, and Disraeli supplied it—"In one hand the keys of St. Peter, and in the other the cap of liberty." "A good picture," as the Attorney-General admitted.

Disraeli had evidently bestowed much care upon his attire in view of his first appearance on the floor of the House of Commons. One who heard him adds this other picture to the precious gallery, which enables us to realise what manner of man he was:—

"He was very showily attired, being dressed in a bottle-green frock-coat, and a waistcoat of white, of the Dick Swiveller pattern, the front of which exhibited a network of glittering chains; large fancy-pattern pantaloons, and a black tie, above which no shirt collar was visible, completed the outward man. A countenance lividly pale, set out by a pair of intensely black eyes, and a broad but not very high forehead, overhung by clustered ringlets of coal-black hair, which, combed away from the right temple, fell in bunches of well-oiled small ringlets over his left cheek."

Of his manner of speech Mr. James Grant, who witnessed the scene from the Reporters' Gallery, writes:—

"His gestures were abundant. He even appeared as if trying with what celerity he could move his body from one side to another, and throw his hands out and draw them in again. At other times he flourished one hand before his face, and then the other. His voice, too, is of a very unusual kind. It is powerful, should it ever have justice done to it in the way of exercise; but there is something peculiar in it which I am at a loss to

characterise. His utterance is rapid, and he never seemed at a loss for words. On the whole, and notwithstanding the result of his first attempt, I am convinced he is a man who possesses many of the requisites of a good debater. That he is a man of literary talent few will dispute."

Disraeli, writing to his sister, reports Peel, under whose leadership the young man had now ranged himself, as "highly encouraging." He said privately to Lord Chandos :—

"Some of my party were disappointed and talk of failure. I say just the reverse. He did all that he could do under the circumstances. I say anything but failure. He must make his way."

This account of the generous attitude of the great Minister is confirmed from an independent quarter. Mr. Grant, continuing his account of Disraeli's first speech, says :—

"It is particularly deserving of mention that even Sir Robert Peel, who very seldom cheers any honourable gentleman, not even the most able and flashy speaker of his own party, greeted Mr. Disraeli's speech with a prodigality of applause, which must have been very trying to the worthy baronet's lungs. Mr. Disraeli spoke from the second row of benches immediately opposite the Speaker's Chair. [The speech was delivered in the chamber where the Commons were temporarily lodged pending the rebuilding of the old Houses of Parliament.] Sir Robert, as usual, sat on the first row of benches, a little to the left of Mr. Disraeli, and so exceedingly anxious was the right honourable Baronet to encourage the *débutant* to proceed, that he repeatedly turned round his head, and, looking the future orator in the face, cheered him in the most stentorian tones."

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Those familiar with the House of Commons in the present day will recognise in this manner of Gladstone's first leader a curious forecast of Gladstone's own habit in later years when he occupied the seat of Leader of the Opposition. With the substitution of names the sentences quoted would serve two or three times in a Session to describe Gladstone's manner when one of his friends on a bench behind the Front Bench or below the Gangway made a speech that particularly pleased him.

There was another habit of Gladstone's upon which Disraeli, sitting opposite to him in the House of Commons, remarked, which appears to be directly inherited from Sir Robert Peel. Everyone having a passing acquaintance with Gladstone's speeches is familiar with his habit of submitting "three courses." This was an oratorical trick of Sir Robert Peel's, upon which Disraeli commented more than sixty years ago:—

"I never knew," Disraeli said, following Peel in debate on the Maynooth Bill, "the right honourable gentleman bring forward a measure without saying that three courses were open to us. In a certain sense, and looking to his own position, he is right. There is the course the right honourable gentleman has left, there is the course the right honourable gentleman has followed, and there is usually the course which the right honourable gentleman ought to follow."

Disraeli was certainly not daunted by the extraordinary reception his maiden speech met with. Eleven days later he spoke again, as he reports to his sister, "with complete success." The subject was the Copyright Bill. As in his first speech the young aspirant did not hesitate to follow O'Connell, in his second he did not shrink from succeeding Peel.

"I was," he writes, "received with the utmost curiosity and attention. All agree that I managed in a few minutes by my voice and manner to please everyone in the House. I do not care about the meagre report, for I spoke to the House and not to the public."

After this his position was assured. He was a frequent participant in debate, and, according to his own modest account transmitted to his sister, he went on from triumph to triumph. On April 26th, 1838, he writes:—

"I made a brilliant speech last night, the crack one of the evening, and all who spoke after me, either for or against, addressed themselves to me."

August 10th, 1838:—

"I spoke the other night after O'Connell with spirit and success. I thought it was well that my voice should be heard at the end of the Session, and especially on an Irish topic."

March 9th, 1839:—

"My last speech was very successful, the best *coup* I have yet made. I was listened to in silence and the utmost attention. Peel especially complimented me."

June 23rd, 1839:—

"How strange that, nearly in despair at the end of the Session, I should have made by universal consent the best speech on our side on a most important party question."

August 13th, 1839:—

"The complete command of the House I now have is remarkable, and nothing could describe to you the mute silence which immediately ensued as I rose, broken only by members hurrying to their places to listen."

Disraeli, as we have seen, entered Parliament as a follower of Sir Robert Peel, and was indebted to the

great Minister for a quite unusual measure of personal attention and encouragement. Gradually he drifted away, finally attaching Lord George Bentinck to himself. Coming to be the actual leader of the Protectionist Party, he entered upon a crusade against Sir Robert Peel which led to some memorable encounters, and finally established his own Parliamentary reputation. Charles Greville, writing under date 21st May, 1846, lifts the curtain on this period, and shows us Peel at bay, with Disraeli, then in the prime of life, heading the attack :—

"Last week the debate in the House of Commons came to a close at last, wound up by a speech of Disraeli's, very clever, in which he hacked and mangled Peel with the most unsparing severity, and positively tortured his victim. It was a miserable and degrading spectacle. The whole mass of the Protectionists cheered him with vociferous delight, making the roof ring again, and when Peel spoke, they screamed and hooted in the most brutal manner. When he vindicated himself, and talked of honour and conscience, they assailed him with shouts of derision and gestures of contempt. Such treatment in the House of Commons, where for years he had been an object of deference and respect, nearly overcame him. The Speaker told me that for a minute and more he was obliged to stop, and for the first time in his life, probably, he lost his self-possession ; and the Speaker thought he would have been obliged to sit down, and expected him to burst into tears. They hunt him like a fox, and they are eager to run him down and kill him in the open. They are full of exultation at thinking they have nearly accomplished this object."

In the spring of 1845, Disraeli, then Member for

Shrewsbury, spoke night after night in attack on Sir Robert Peel. It was in one of this cluster of brilliant harangues that he uttered the memorable gibe :—

"The right honourable gentleman caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their Liberal position, and he is himself a strict Conservative of their garments."

Writing to his sister on the 21st of March, 1845, describing one of these scenes, he says :—

"As for Peel, he was stunned and stupefied, lost his head, and vacillating between silence and spleen, spoke much and weakly. Never was a greater failure, assuring me that I had not hurt his feelings—that he would never reciprocate personalities again, having no venom, etc."

Of Gladstone we catch one or two glimpses in the course of these priceless letters. He meets him in January, 1835, at a dinner given by the Chancellor to Lord Abinger. "Rather dull, but we had a swan, very white and tender, and stuffed with truffles, the best company there."

In February, 1838, he writes :—

"Gladstone spoke very well, though with the unavoidable want of interest which accompanies elaborate speeches which you know are to lead to no result, *i.e.*, no division."

February 6th, 1845 :—

"Gladstone's address on his retirement from the Presidency of the Board of Trade was involved and ineffective. He may have an *avenir*, but I hardly think it."

On the 13th of May, 1850, he dines for the first time at the Academy dinner.

"I sat within two of Peel, and between Gladstone and

Sydney Herbert. It went off very well, Gladstone being particularly agreeable."

Outside Parliament, Disraeli's position about this time is shown by the fact that, in 1844, he was invited to take the chair at the founding of the Manchester Athenæum, and deliver the inaugural address. He accepted the invitation and arranged to be accompanied by some of the aristocratic lions of the Young England Party, including Lord John Manners, and George Smythe, son of Lord Strangford. I have come across a letter written about this time by the Duke of Rutland to Lord Strangford which throws a curious sidelight on the view taken at this time by the Tory magnates of the brilliant politician who was irresistibly thrusting himself to the front.

"I deplore as much as you do," wrote the Duke, "the influence which Disraeli has acquired over many of our young legislators, particularly over your son and over mine. I have no personal knowledge of Mr. Disraeli, and I have not an entire respect for his talents, of which I think he might make a better use. It is regrettable that two young men like John and Mr. Smythe should allow themselves to be led away by a man of whose straightforwardness I have the same opinion as yourself, as I can only judge of it by his public career. The excellent dispositions of our sons render them only too susceptible to the seductions of an artful mind."

All unconscious of this letter, Disraeli was, five years later, enjoying the hospitalities of Belvoir Castle.

"We live here," he writes to his sister under date January 21st, 1850, "in the state-rooms, brilliantly illuminated at night, and at all times deliciously warm, even in this severe winter." (Through all his life

Disraeli yearned for warmth. Sunlight if he could get it, warmth anyhow.)

"The party here is very large, but chiefly the family —a Christmas gathering. There are shooting-parties every day, and, advanced as the Duke is, he is never away from them. I never met a man at his time of life so cheerful, and, indeed, so vivacious."

His acquaintance with his future wife arose in the course of his colleagueship with Mr. Wyndham Lewis in the representation of Maidstone. Marriage as bearing upon his fortunes had not escaped the consideration of Disraeli, and in one of his letters to his sister he frankly discusses it.

"By the bye," he writes on May 23rd, 1833, "would you like Lady *Z*— for a sister-in-law, very clever, £25,000, and domestic? As for 'love,' all my friends who married for love and beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them. This is literally the case. I may commit many follies in life, but I never intend to marry for 'love,' which, I am sure, is a guarantee of infelicity."

It is reasonable to suppose that all his references to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis do not appear in the letters published. In what we have the change is a little abrupt from "Mrs. Lewis," to "Mary Anne." His first reference to the lady is found under date April 7th, 1832:—

"I was introduced, 'by particular desire,' to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a pretty little woman, a flirt, and a rattle. Indeed, gifted with a volubility I should think unequalled, and of which I can convey no idea. She told me that she 'liked silent, melancholy men.' I answered 'that I had no doubt of it.'"

Early in 1838, Mr. Wyndham Lewis died, and

shortly indications of closer communion with the widow are apparent. In the following June, Disraeli, in common with other M.P.'s, had a gold medal presented to him, a memorial of the Coronation. "But I have presented it to Mrs. W. L." Next month there is "a splendid review in Hyde Park. I saw it admirably from Mrs. W. L.'s." The next reference is in a letter dated the 13th of August, 1839. "Our marriage is fixed for Wednesday"; thereafter "Mrs. W. L." becomes "Mary Anne."

This marriage was one of the happy turning-points in Disraeli's career. It gave him that assured competence indispensable to a politician, as placing him above the temptation, even the suspicion, of being influenced by considerations of monetary necessity. Beyond this was gained the companionship of one who was truly a helpmate, upon whose head he was enabled in later years gracefully to place a coronet.

In this survey of the early life of Disraeli I have endeavoured to let the picture stand forth either as limned in little touches, often unconsciously drawn, by his own hand, or by the pen or lips of contemporaries who wrote or spoke of him without prevision of the great position for which he was working. It will be noted that if his autobiographical sketches err on the side of exaggerated self-approval that is not a failing to be traced in the critical remarks of his contemporaries. In truth an adequate appreciation of the force of Disraeli's character, the doggedness of his courage and the sublimity of his audacity, can be reached only after due appreciation of the difficulties by which his pathway was surrounded. Those who knew him only after the General Election of 1874 have inadequate and misleading conception of his life's struggle. When, in January, 1874,

he took his seat on the Treasury Bench in the House of Commons, head of a substantial majority, he was able for the first time to feel that the long fight was over, and that he was actually master of the situation. He had been in high position before, Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Derby in 1852, and four times after, in 1858, 1859, 1866 and 1868. In the latter year he became First Lord of the Treasury. But up to 1874, though the Conservative Party could not do without him, were even compelled to accept him, they neither loved nor honoured him. His bitterest foes were those of his own household. Lord Derby stood by him stoutly, among principal personages almost alone in his loyalty. We have seen in the Duke of Rutland's letter to Lord Strangford the sort of things that were said behind his back by the magnates of the party he was serving.

Here are a few genial lines the *Saturday Review*, the organ of tip-top Toryism, published at the opening of the Session of 1856, by way of recording a Parliamentary dinner given by Disraeli in his capacity as Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

"Moses and Son have had of late,
At their branch mansion, Grosvenor Gate,
Their pride and happiness to see
The very first nobility.

Go read the press. 'Tis doubtful whether
Such nobs were ever brought together,
As on the glorious evening poured
To throng triumphant Moses's board.

* * * *

And o'er them all in jewels dight,
Not known from real in any light,
And St. John's clothes, as good as new,
Enraptured sat the glorious Jew."

Beresford Hope, proprietor of the *Saturday*, preserved even in the days of Disraeli's fullest triumph, those sentiments of personal aversion and suspicion which once animated the inner circles of the Conservative Party, and occasionally found scathing expression from the lips of the young patrician, then known successively as Lord Robert Cecil and Lord Cranborne. One of the attacks made upon his Leader by Beresford Hope led to a repartee that has become historical. It was in 1867, in Committee on the Reform Bill, that Hope, with a sneering reference to the "Tapers and Tadpoles of certain amusing story books," hotly declared that, "sink or swim, dissolution or no dissolution, whether he was in the next Parliament or out of it, he for one with his whole heart and conscience would vote against the Asian Mystery." Disraeli sat imperturbable on the Treasury Bench, apparently taking no note of this pointed reference to his ancestry. But when he rose he did not forget Beresford Hope.

"I can assure the honourable gentleman," he said, "that I listened with great pleasure to the invectives he delivered against me. I admire his style. It is a very great ornament of discussion; but it requires practice. [Not 'finish' as is usually quoted.] I listen with great satisfaction to all his exhibitions in this House, and when he talks about an 'Asian Mystery' I will tell him that there are Batavian graces in all that he says which I notice with satisfaction and which charm me."

Those familiar with Disraeli only in the closing years will find much to marvel at in the disclosures made of his earlier life and manner. In the days when he wore the black velvet coat lined with satin, the purple trousers, the scarlet waistcoat, and the long lace ruffles, he appears to have been a youth of even dazzling personal

beauty. Handsome youths not infrequently develop into comely old men. Lord Beaconsfield's face in old age could certainly not be called handsome. Of his once luxurious curling locks there remained a carefully-nurtured residue suspiciously black in hue. To the last he wore the single curl drooping over his forehead. He had abandoned all foppery of dress, though on fine spring days, as already noted, he liked to wear lavender kid gloves. Unlike Gladstone, who regularly greeted the summer arrayed in a white hat, a light tweed suit, and a blue necktie, Lord Beaconsfield was ever soberly attired, the cut of his clothes suggesting rather the efforts of Hughenden art than the triumphs of Bond Street. Of his good looks there were left a pair of eyes remarkably luminous for one of his age, and plump, small, well-shaped white hands, of which he was pardonably proud.

He was a consummate master of the House of Commons. He never missed a point or lost an advantage. Habitually, when Leader of the House, he refrained as far as possible from taking part in debate. He never made opportunity to deliver a speech, and often passed it by with advantage to the progress of public business. His happiest efforts were often those for which he had made least elaborate preparation. He could not keep the pace with Gladstone in an oration of an hour or more; but for a twenty minutes' speech, sparkling with wit, strong in argument, happy in saying precisely the right thing in the right way, he was unsurpassed and inapproachable.

So recently as 1873, the distrust and dislike inherent in the Conservative Party showed itself ripe for expression whenever opportunity presented itself. When, in this year, Gladstone's Government being defeated on the Irish University Bill, Disraeli declined to undertake the conduct of the Government in the existing House

of Commons, there was much angry resentment by disappointed place-hunters. Pressure was put upon him to alter his determination. He stood firm, and in an eloquent passage touched with pathos, defended himself in the House of Commons from attacks made from the rear and on the flank.

"Sir," he said, "when the time arrives, and when the great Constitutional Party enters upon a career which must be noble, and which I hope and believe will be triumphant, I think they may perhaps remember, and I trust not with unkindness, that I, at least, prevented one obstacle from being placed in their way; that I, as the trustee of their honour and interests, declined to form a weak and discredited Administration."

His prescience was vindicated by the results of the General Election, which took place in the following year, and placed his party and himself at the head of affairs with a majority that for the first time in his political life gave him untrammelled power. The dramatic interest of the episode was crowned by the fact that coincidentally with his supreme elevation came about the ruinous, apparently irrevocable, fall of his life-long rival. Thereafter his life's journey was a triumphal march. Old age fell upon him, accompanied by honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. Lord Cranborne, master of gibes, and flouts, and sneers, blossomed into the Marquis of Salisbury, his right-hand man, successor-designate of his high office. The extreme of acerbity with which his youth and middle age had been attacked, was equalled only by the adulation that cheered the closing years of his life—a strange eventful life, exceeding in adventure anything attributed to the heroes of his fiction, crowned by a success that was the prize of patient endeavour and supreme genius.

(3) THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY.

Jan., 1886—June, 1886. Aug., 1886—June, 1892.
Aug., 1895—Sept., 1900. Dec., 1900—July, 1902.

THE Marquis of Salisbury when he came to the Premiership had an advantage withheld from Lord Rosebery. For many years of his early life he not only sat in the House of Commons but took an active part in its affairs. Sir William Harcourt was one of the few Members of recent Parliaments who was his contemporary. It was strange to hear on this personal testimony that Lord Robert Cecil, Member for Stamford fifty years ago, strongly resembled in personal appearance the Lord Hugh Cecil whose temporary withdrawal from Parliamentary life is a national regret. In later life Lord Salisbury developed fleshly proportions that make it difficult to believe he grew from the slight stem represented by the figure of his fifth son.

In other respects father and son are singularly alike. For the present generation the ex-Member for Greenwich revived the style of polished acerbity with which his father, first as Lord Robert Cecil, then as Viscount Cranborne, assailed Disraeli, Lord John Russell, and other of his personal animosities in the House of Commons. The resemblance between father and son in oratorical style was marked up to the last, though to a certain extent increased age and official responsibility curbed the bitterness of Lord Salisbury's tongue. Lord Hugh Cecil, not hampered by any of these conditions,

harked back to the unspoiled type of the Member for Stamford returned in the year 1853.

Of the five Premiers I have known Lord Salisbury was least accessible by the public. This statement applies to all classes of society. Gladstone was a frequent diner-out, and so are Lord Rosebery and Mr. Arthur Balfour. Till advancing years and failing strength necessitated comparative seclusion, Disraeli was frequently to be met in certain social circles. Lord Salisbury neither dined out nor to any great extent invited others to dinner. Happy in his family circle he was content to rest within its bounds. Whilst Lady Salisbury was alive there were one or two receptions in Arlington Street and an occasional garden party at Hatfield. These were matters of duty to be got through as quickly and with as little frequency as possible.

Lord Salisbury was stubbornly indisposed to bend the knee to that political Baal the Man in the Street. He was not careful to hide the dislike and contempt he had for mobs of all kind, not excluding the House of Commons. During his long life he fought all proposals designed to increase the power of the masses. The arbitrary spirit of the statesman of the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth was in his blood, and it came out in his words and acts. If he did not like a man he did not hesitate to say exactly what he thought of him. This tendency occasionally led him into what came to be known as "blazing indiscretions" of speech. Such an one was the likening of Irishmen to Hottentots, and the suggestion that they should be governed on the same general principles. Another was his allusion to a harmless native of India who succeeded in winning a seat at the election of 1895. He jeered at him as "the black man," a distinction shrewdly seized by the

Member in question, who lost no subsequent opportunity of appealing to popular sympathy as "Lord Salisbury's black man."

As equipment for the battle of life Lord Salisbury had other advantages, perhaps not fully appreciated at the time of their enforcement. Born to the heritage of a younger son, he found it desirable to eke out his allowance by earning money with his pen. For some years he was a regular contributor to *Bentley's Quarterly Review*, and was one of the main supporters of the pungency and brilliancy of the *Saturday Review*. Back numbers of these periodicals still flash with the lambent light of his scathing wit. Two years ago, looking through a batch of autograph letters prepared for sale, I came upon one in Lord Salisbury's handwriting, addressed to Abraham Hayward. It does not bear date of the year, but, as it is signed "Robert Cecil," it must have been written prior to 1865, when, on the death of his elder brother, the future Premier succeeded to the courtesy title of Lord Cranborne and the direct heirship of the marquisate.

"A new review," Lord Robert writes, "has been projected, of which I am one of the editors, and knowing how valuable your co-operation has been to the other reviews, I venture to ask you whether you have the leisure, or if the leisure the inclination, occasionally to contribute to this new one; its main object is to supply the liveliness which has been so painfully lacking lately in the elderly quarterlies, without the startling peculiarities on the subject of religion which have stood so much in the way of the new ones."

Diligent search in various quarters failed to solve the mystery of this enterprise, to ascertain its success or failure. In reply to enquiry, Lord Hugh Cecil writes

to me: "I never heard of the review in question. It is just conceivable it may be the *Saturday*. If not, I cannot explain the letter." Another correspondent suggests that it must have been *Bentley's Quarterly*, understood at the time to express the views of Lord Robert Cecil. "It did not reach many numbers," he adds, "and what I chiefly remember about it is that it appeared in flaming crimson covers." Lord Robert discussed with untrammelled freedom contemporaries in Parliament. Of Gladstone he wrote during the heat of controversy round Disraeli's Reform Bill: "High character, eloquence that no rival can approach, great financial skill, enormous capacity for work, have all been bestowed on him, and bestowed in vain. Some malign influence strangely brooding over him forbids him to form any definite or consistent creed. Swayed now by passion, now by crotchet, he disgusts by his violent oscillations each political section in turn. He has become the standing difficulty of political leaders, who do not like to have a man with so much eloquence for their enemy, or a man with so many enemies for their friend."

The young man hated Gladstone with the bitter feeling of a Tory of long lineage. He despised Disraeli with the lofty scorn of a patrician for an adventurer. It is an odd coincidence in the life of a statesman that considerations of policy and expediency should have brought him into close companionship with two men at successive epochs equally the objects of his distrust and contempt. If, fifty years ago, he had been told that before he retired from public life he would have served under the Premiership of Disraeli, the prophet would hardly have been safe within reach of his arm.

Not more credible would have been prognostication

ventured upon twenty years ago pointing to Mr. Chamberlain as the mainstay of his Cabinet. It would be difficult to say which of the two men Lord Salisbury disliked the more. His observations personal to Mr. Chamberlain during and after the Radical Leader's campaign in support of what, in 1885, was known as "The Unauthorised Programme," are scattered through passages of his speeches of the date. To do Mr. Chamberlain justice, he was neither slow nor ineffective in retort.

Whilst Lord Salisbury was in the House of Commons he attacked Disraeli with unflagging vigour. Nor was he content with spoken words. "Loss of character," he wrote, shortly after Lord Derby nominated Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer, "is an evil strangely underrated by the Conservative Leaders ever since Mr. Disraeli has been admitted to their counsels. He is eminently alive to the power of public opinion. In fact, there are very few subjects on which he would not prefer it to his own convictions. But to the value of a public character he is wholly blind. It is a blindness that has haunted him and hindered him through his whole career." Dwelling on the disgust created in Tory circles by Disraeli's inclusion among their leaders, Lord Robert Cecil writes in a phrase that might have dropped from the lips of Lord Hugh: "It is not easy to recruit soldiers for a service in which the campaigns, after many muddled marches, invariably end in hoisting the enemy's colours."

How this sort of thing can be forgotten (if they be forgotten) in later relations of public life and social intercourse is one of the marvels men below the status of Cabinet Ministers cannot understand. Presumably Lord Salisbury worked in perfect amity alike with

Disraeli and with Mr. Chamberlain when the whirligig of time brought them into close colleagueship.

As for Mr. Chamberlain, the two colleagues being separated by the width of Westminster Palace that divides the House of Lords from the House of Commons, no opportunity was afforded the public of seeing them in company. As far as was known, the two statesmen, by birth, training, disposition, and, at one time, politics, wide as the poles asunder, worked together amicably. One thing, however, is quite certain. Mr. Chamberlain would never have promulgated his new fiscal policy whilst Lord Salisbury was the head of the Unionist Cabinet. To the end Lord Salisbury was an implacable Free Trader. A few weeks before his death, shortly after Mr. Chamberlain had raised at Birmingham the flag of Preferential Tariffs, one of Lord Salisbury's nearest of kin told me the ex-Premier had abandoned intention of revisiting the House of Lords. But he declared that if the time came when Mr. Chamberlain's scheme should be advocated by any Ministry, and proposition submitted to Parliament to give it effect, if alive and able to bear the journey to Westminster, he would return to the old place and lift up his voice in denunciation.

It is a curious thing, little known I fancy, that when reversion of the peerage came to the Lord Cranborne of the day, at the time seated in the House of Commons, he strongly resented the prospect of spending the rest of his political life in the Upper Chamber. He even went so far as to consult an eminent barrister as to the possibility of evading the call. Once translated to the serene atmosphere of the Lords, his born aristocratic disposition developed, and with it the growth of personal dislike and assumed contempt of the Commons. Nothing delighted

him more than an opportunity of flouting their authority. Twice under his Leadership conflict was threatened between the two Houses which, if not averted, would have led to fundamental changes in the Constitution. The first occasion was in 1884, when the Local Government Bill was sent up to the Lords by an overwhelming majority in a Liberal House of Commons. Lord Salisbury would not have it at any price. Matters reached a pitch at which Gladstone halted between two opinions—whether to create a number of new peers sufficient to carry this particular Bill through the Lords, or to go to the country with appeal to the people to say what should be done in the deadlock.

Lord Salisbury was aware of this state of things, but was not to be turned aside from his avowed deliberate purpose of fighting it out with the Commons. Queen Victoria, alarmed at the prospect, convinced that the public once roused things would go hard with the Lords, took the extreme course of personally interfering. She summoned the Duke of Richmond to her counsels and commissioned him to act as an intermediary between Lord Salisbury and the Government. This was influence irresistible to the descendant of Queen Elizabeth's Minister. Lord Salisbury, implacable in view of popular protest against his attitude, promptly bowed the knee to his Sovereign. A compromise was arrived at whereby peril was averted and the Bill passed.

The struggle was renewed in the very last year of Gladstone's Ministerial life. In 1894 the Lords, having thrown out the Home Rule Bill, laid rough hands on the Parish Councils Bill. They sent it back to the Commons hopelessly maimed. The Radical section of the Ministerial Party bitterly resented this interference with their liberty of action. They insisted on being led

against the House of Lords in final battle. Till the publication of Mr. Morley's "Life of Gladstone" it was not generally known that the veteran Premier was as eager as Mr. Labouchere to come to grips with the Lords. He proposed to the Cabinet that Parliament should be dissolved, and the country appealed to on the definite subject of the position of the Lords in the Legislature. A vote being taken, the Premier's proposal was negatived by a considerable majority.

When, on the 1st of March, 1894, Gladstone, making what proved to be his last speech in the Commons, loyally yielding to the views of the majority in the Cabinet, recommended acceptance of the Lords' Amendments to the Parish Councils Bill, there was an anguished howl of disappointment from Radicals below the gangway. With battle almost in sight, here was the order to sheathe swords and unload batteries. So angry were they that revolt broke forth on this last occasion when Gladstone attempted to exert the authority of Leader of the House.

It was reported at the time that Lord Salisbury enjoyed this episode more than anything that had befallen him since his last personal fight with Disraeli. He had triumphed all along the line, against an Assembly which he regarded with the animosity of a dismissed lover. As far as I know, or have heard, he never entered the House of Commons after having been summoned to the Upper House. Nor was he ever seen chatting in the Lobby with political supporters. Whilst Beaconsfield led the Lords he not infrequently dropped in on the scene of his old triumphs, and through his single eye-glass quizzically regarded it from the unaccustomed point of view of the Peers' Gallery. Lord Rosebery, holding the same position, was an even more

frequent visitor, an example followed by the Duke of Devonshire. It was Lord Salisbury's whimsical humour to regard the House of Commons as a body which, if not absolutely non-existent, was of no importance. Whenever in debate he was compelled to allude to it, he managed to throw into his tone a note of contempt that greatly amused Commoners thronging the Bar, or Privy Councillors standing on the steps of the Throne.

This was, of course, merely affectation, though I believe there was none in his ignorance of the personality of more or less distinguished Members of the Commons. Since he never went there and rarely was seen outside the doors of his house in Arlington Street, he could not be expected to know M.P.'s when he chanced to come across them. It is, however, difficult to believe a story. gravely told, illustrating this mannerism. One day in the Parliamentary Session (so the story runs), Lord Salisbury was walking up St. James's Street in the respectable company of a Bishop. Mr. Walter Long, passing them, saluted with friendly gesture.

"Who is your jovial friend with the highly-coloured cast of countenance?" Lord Salisbury asked, as the ruddy-faced President of the Board of Agriculture passed on.

"Well, my lord," said the Bishop, "I thought you might have known Walter Long, he being a member of your own Cabinet."

When, in 1866, Lord Derby formed his Third Administration, he was careful to close the mouth of the terrible Member for Stamford. He induced him to accept the post of Secretary of State for India. It was not long held. In the following year, Disraeli brought in his famous Reform Bill, designed to dish the Whigs. Lord Cranborne, as the now heir-apparent to the

marquisate had become, promptly resigned, and thoroughly enjoyed himself in fusillading "Dizzy" and his Bill. With him went General Peel and Lord Carnarvon. The latter showed fresh disposition to resign when the whirligig of time brought Disraeli to the Premiership with Lord Salisbury a colleague. In 1868, the new Marquis took his seat in the House of Lords, coming much to the front in debate on the far-reaching legislation introduced by Gladstone in the memorable Parliament elected in that year.

A statesman of high order, a Parliamentary debater in the first rank, Lord Salisbury was essentially a man of business. He devoted much time to the personal management of the vast estate that had unexpectedly fallen under his control. If he had not been a marquis he would have earned three or four pounds a week as a mechanic. He had a laboratory and workshop at Hatfield, where he spent what he regarded as the happiest hours of his life. In politics a Conservative to the marrow, in matters of science he was almost a Radical. One of the first men in this country to recognise the possibilities of the electric light, he perceived the advantage that might be derived from the river running through his park. He harnessed it to an electrical machine, constructing a system of works that supply Hatfield House with a cheap and constant supply of illumination. Three years after he succeeded to the marquisate he, in conjunction with the late Earl Cairns, embarked upon investigation of the then complicated affairs of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company.

In 1874, Disraeli came into power. He had an immense majority in both Houses, but that would scarcely avail if his ancient foeman, Lord Salisbury,

stood aloof. With characteristic audacity, Disraeli offered him his former post of Secretary of State for India. It must have been a bitter pill to swallow. Lord Salisbury gulped it down as, in years to come, he was to suffer similar discipline at the hands of Mr. Chamberlain. The experiment turned out most successful.

Once, very early in the strange alliance, there was forthcoming evidence that the ancient fires still burned. Towards the end of the Session of 1874, after something less than six months' colleagueship between the ancient adversaries, Sir William Harcourt made complaint in the House of Commons of certain strong language indulged in by the Secretary of State for India.

"As the House knows," Disraeli replied, with apologetic shrug of his shoulders, "My noble colleague is a master of the art of jeers and flouts and sneers."

On the whole, the Premier indicated the opinion that the House might safely disregard the remarks referred to as those of a gentleman who occasionally permitted himself to be led away by the temptation to say bitter things for no other reason than that they were smart.

This was the only outward sign visible during their colleagueship of temporary recurrence to the ancient attitude of controversy. Friendship, commencing late in life with no other incentive than political convenience, warmed as it lengthened. In 1876 Lord Salisbury, at Disraeli's suggestion, presided in Constantinople at the abortive Conference that followed upon the close of the war between Turkey and Servia. His success on this mission indicated the true pith of his statesmanship. When, in 1878, Lord Derby, alarmed at the rising flood of what at the time was known as Jingoism, resigned

his post at the Foreign Office, Lord Salisbury succeeded him. The new Foreign Secretary promptly made his mark by the issue of a dispatch in which, with the trained hand of a gentleman of the Press, he forcibly defined the policy of the British Government on the Eastern Question.

Later in the same year he accompanied Lord Beaconsfield on his journey to join the Congress which framed the famous Berlin Treaty. All the world knows how, amid the applause of the nation, the two came home together bringing Peace with Honour. It is pleasantly indicative of the new relations of the former foemen that, shortly after Lord Beaconsfield's defeat at the General Election, Hatfield was placed at his disposal for a while as an autumn residence. When he died there was some dispute as to who should succeed him. Lord Cairns was mentioned, and that safe utility man, the Duke of Richmond, for a while handled the reins fallen from the hands of the dead Leader. Lord Salisbury was inevitable. Shortly after the opening of the Session of 1881 he was hailed Leader of the Conservative Party, and took his seat opposite Lord Granville, with whom, to the delight of the House, he from time to time crossed rapiers.

Save for the tendency to wreck the House of Lords in conflict with the Commons, Lord Salisbury was a supreme Leader. He had the great gift, shared with Disraeli, unfamiliar to Gladstone, of knowing when it was well not to make a speech. When he did interpose in debate it was with the authority of a great statesman, the art of an epigrammatist speaker. His style had the polish of the literary man, but it never slipped into the hard and fast lines of the essayist. Unlike most debaters of his rank and responsibility, he made no notes

in preparation for speaking. He sat through a debate, however long or dreary, with no sign of intention to speak beyond the incessant shaking of his right foot crossed over his knee. When Members saw this in progress they knew they were to expect a speech.

Unassisted by notes, he forgot nothing, and, replying, always said the right thing. With slow utterance, sonorous voice, occasionally dropping into icily mocking tone, he flung forth the barbed arrows of withering sarcasm. Although obviously composed on the spur of the moment, the process of composition being visible to the audience by the physical movement referred to, his sentences were perfectly constructed. One that lives in my memory illumined a speech in which he reviewed the foreign policy of Gladstone's first Administration, then drawing to a close. Speaking of it as a Ministry of heroic measures, he added :—

"Far be it from me to accuse them of heroism. They keep their heroism for the Home Office. They don't let it transgress the threshold of the Foreign Office. They offer to us a remarkable instance of Christian meekness and humility. But it is the kind of Christian meekness that turns the left cheek to Russia and America and demands the uttermost farthing of Ashantee."

It needs to recall the troubled course of events that marked the Parliament of 1880-5 to realise the exquisite severity of this gibe.

His position in English political life, and especially in the House of Lords, was a peculiar one. A man born out of due season, the fact that he, with increasing skill and success adapted himself to circumstances, is crowning proof of his consummate ability. He should have lived in those spacious times when another Cecil was at

the head of English affairs. He would have done much more as Counsellor to Queen Elizabeth than he accomplished as Queen Victoria's Minister. With an almost total absence of sympathy with the people, he fell upon a time when the people were more and more, and the crown and its appanages less and less. Obliged to take into account the House of Commons, and what he regarded as its vagaries and its prejudices, he was never at pains to disguise his dislike of it and all it represents.

This is a point on which Disraeli, with his keen intuition of popular impulses, had the advantage over the friend of his declining years. There is a story told of Lord Melbourne which is probably apocryphal, but if anything like it in analogous circumstances were told of Lord Salisbury it would readily be believed. It was at the time of the Corn Law struggle, one of the phases of which had been discussed at a Cabinet meeting, other topics intervening before the Council broke up. As his colleagues were going away, Lord Melbourne leaned over the banisters and called out: "Is bread to go up or down? I don't care which it is, you know, but we had better all be of the same story."

Just before the Session of 1890 closed, Lord Salisbury, with characteristic contempt for subterfuge, made in the House of Lords a speech conceived in the very spirit of this off-hand remark over the banisters. A Bill dealing with local rates promoted by the Corporation of Dublin came up from the Commons. It was a measure in charge of the Chief Secretary, and in carrying the Bill through the Commons Mr. Balfour, at the time holding the office, had the unwonted assistance of the Irish Members. That was sufficient to excite the ire of noble lords like the Duke of Westminster, the Marquis of Waterford, and Lord Wemyss.

At the last moment they broke into open revolt. The Bill had actually been read a third time, and it was on the formal stage, "That the Bill do pass," that Lord Wemyss moved an amendment, which, if carried, would have thrown it out. There was a strong whip out and the malcontent lords mustered in numbers which surely presaged the loss of the measure.

Lord Salisbury, sitting in his favourite attitude, with his elbow on the back of the bench, his head resting on his hand, his back turned to the bishops, listened to the impassioned debate. Members of the Commons, leaving their own Chamber, crowded the Bar and the galleries over the pens where strangers stand, such of them as were Privy Councillors availing themselves of their privilege to stand on the steps of the Throne. Among these was Mr. Balfour, smiling genially, whilst Lord Wemyss declaimed, and Lord Waterford, remaining seated in token of a terrible fall from his horse on the hunting field, demonstrated how all was up with the Union if this iniquitous Bill passed.

To the Commons, looking on, its fate seemed sealed, and there was animated talk as to what line Mr. Balfour would take if he were thus openly and studiously flouted. When there appeared nothing left but the division, the Premier stirred his vast bulk and lounged up to the table. He did not trouble himself with any elaborate defence of the Bill. To him it was a ludicrously insignificant thing whether rates were collected in Dublin under one system or another. What he had to point out was that the Bill was an incidental feature in the Irish policy of the Government as carried out by Mr. Balfour. Did noble lords approve that policy as a whole or did they not? If they did, and the cheer that resounded through the House gave clear assurance of

their feeling in the matter, they must take it as a whole. "You cannot," Lord Salisbury said, "be allowed to pick out bits here and there, and say you won't have them."

Here was the unconscious echo of Lord Melbourne's remark thrown over the banisters. "Are we," Lord Salisbury said, in effect, "to support Mr. Balfour's policy in Ireland, or are we to desert him and let in Home Rule and Mr. Gladstone? I don't care which it is, you know, but we must stick to a definite line of action." It is an axiom cynically accepted in Parliament that a speech rarely, if ever, affects votes. On this occasion Lord Salisbury triumphantly proved the exception. Had he been accidentally absent or, being present, had he refrained from taking part in the debate, the Bill would indubitably have been lost. As it was, the carefully marshalled majority silently melted away, and when the tellers returned from the Division Lobby the Bill was declared to be carried.

The delivery of this memorable speech afforded to those fortunate enough to hear it a fair idea of Lord Salisbury's oratorial style. Unlike Gladstone, he but slightly varied the level excellence of his speech. Never attempting the high flights at which Gladstone was accustomed to soar, there was not opportunity for comparative failure. Lord Salisbury, in addressing the House of Lords, did not make speeches to them. He just talked; but with what clearness of perception, what command of his subject, what vigorous and well-ordered sentences, what irresistible arguments, and now and then with what delicate refreshing rain of cynicism! Doubtless a Minister in his position must carefully prepare his speeches on public affairs. Lord Salisbury had, in peculiar degree, the art of concealing his art.

On a later occasion he was called upon to explain the details of an arrangement concluded with Portugal for the settlement of contending claims in Africa. It was an exceedingly intricate affair, involving a historical review, and the adjustment of nice points of latitude and longitude, not to mention the recital of barbarous and unfamiliar geographical terms. It was precisely the case in which the most practised speaker would gratefully have taken refuge in a sheaf of notes. Lord Salisbury had not a scrap of paper in his hand as he unwove the tangled skein, and when he sat down, after talking for twelve minutes, he had made the whole case clear to the perception of the dullest peer in the assembly.

Lord Salisbury's acerbity did not extend beyond his manner of speech. Behind its veil he was a gentle-hearted, lovable man who hated only meanness of spirit, was impatient of incapacity, self-sacrificing in effort to live up to the standard of a servant of his country set up by an ancestor in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

(4) EARL OF ROSEBERY.

March, 1894—July, 1895.

THERE was a well remembered scene in the House of Commons when Lord Wolmer, Member for West Edinburgh, coming into the paternal earldom of Selborne, made a raid across the Bar, insisting on retaining his seat. He was aided and abetted by Lord Curzon, late Viceroy of India and Mr. St. John Brodrick, eldest sons of peers over whom a kindred cloud glowered. On Mr. Brodrick it has since fallen. The new earl was repulsed, driven back to the House of Lords, where he discontentedly seated himself, rising in time to the post of First Lord of the Admiralty and the position of Cabinet Minister, in due course appointed to the Government of South Africa. He could not have done better had he remained in the Commons, a circumstance that should carry comfort to the breasts of suffering eldest sons.

The Earl of Rosebery never sat in the House of Commons, and as far as is known made no effort to avoid the coronet that descended to him on the death of his grandfather. Upon occasion he does not refrain from complaining of the hardness of his lot. A hereditary legislator he looks with yearning eyes upon the more exciting and busier battlefield of the Commons. There is no doubt that had Mr. Archibald Philip Primrose taken his seat in the Commons as Member for Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle or other congested

district of busy men, he would speedily have advanced to the Treasury Bench. Handicapped with a peerage, he nevertheless seized the prize of the Premiership. But in the victory lurked the seeds of disaster. It is all very well for the Conservative Party to find their Prime Minister in the Upper House. In the Liberal camp prejudice against the arrangement, deeply seated, grows with the passing years. A Liberal beyond reproach, personally popular, a statesman of proved ability, Lord Rosebery as Premier never possessed the support of an undivided party. As a man they liked him; as a peer they would have none of him.

It was Gladstone who, discerning in close companionship the ability of the young Lord of Dalmeny, nominated him as his successor. Few actions of the right honourable gentleman gave greater pleasure to Queen Victoria, with whom Lord Rosebery was a prime favourite.

Gladstone's friendship ripened during the series of Midlothian campaigns when he was a guest at Dalmeny. His host had a seat in the House of Lords and took an occasional modest part in public affairs. Previous to the first Midlothian campaign his name had not become familiar in the public ear. The fierce light that beat upon that historic foray across the Border revealed the young Lord of Dalmeny as a man with a cool head and ready wit, capable of presiding over and controlling excited public meetings.

It came to pass, as campaign followed campaign, Lord Rosebery was forced into a position second only to that of his illustrious guest. At successive meetings the storm of cheering that welcomed the veteran statesman's appearance broke forth again when the young peer was caught sight of. No meeting at which he was

present on the platform could be induced to disperse till he had supplemented Gladstone's oration with a few remarks. This honour paid to a prophet in his own country increased on closer acquaintance till it grew embarrassing. In the later campaign Lord Rosebery, as far as possible, abstained from accompanying Gladstone on to the platform, shrinking from a position in which he involuntarily appropriated a share of the popular homage which he held should be exclusively a tribute to his Leader.

The future Premier began at the bottom of the Ministerial ladder accepting office in Gladstone's second Administration as Under-Secretary for State in the Home Department. Here he enjoyed the advantage of having Sir William Harcourt as chief, commencing those personal relations which culminated in the break-up of his first Administration and his subsequent retirement from the Leadership of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords. He found two years at the Home Office sufficient, and, Gladstone urgently desiring his continued colleagueship in the Ministry, he took the Privy Seal, an office of some dignity and no labour. After a brief space at the Office of Works he drifted into his proper place as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Retiring after the General Election and suffering from insomnia brought on by overwork in anxious times at the Foreign Office, he showed a disposition to rest awhile.

In 1886, with the Home Rule Bill voluntarily tied round his neck, Gladstone found himself in sore difficulty. The Thanes were flying from him. Some of the strongest members of his Government had seceded. Lord Rosebery was not the man to leave an old commander and friend in the lurch. Making nought of

his physical infirmity he returned to the Foreign Office, an accession that proved a tower of strength to the harassed Premier. Home Rulers and Unionists were at one in expression of satisfaction at seeing the seals of the Foreign Office in strong and habile hands.

To a man's pre-eminence in British politics it is necessary that he should have the quality of being personally interesting to the public. There are two modern instances that clearly illustrate what it is difficult to define. Sir Robert Peel was a statesman of far higher rank than Lord Palmerston. But in the average British household, to which he pathetically appealed in a famous passage in one of his last speeches, the cheapener of the poor man's bread was not enshrined a familiar friend as was Palmerston. Everyone knew the latter, called him "Pam," and told stories about him. Nobody thought of calling Sir Robert Peel "Bob." When he fell off his horse on Constitution Hill probably the first feeling in the public mind was surprise that a personage popularly regarded as a sort of abstraction should do so ordinary a thing as get astride a horse.

In quite varying fashion Disraeli and Gladstone possessed this gift in supreme degree. Sir William Harcourt occasionally seemed to reach the eminence, but never quite dwelt upon it. He was more interesting as a House of Commons man than as one capable of moving what is called the great heart of the people. Mr. Arthur Balfour has potentialities in this direction, and, if he cared to cultivate the part, might shine in it. The secret does not dwell with the Duke of Devonshire, nor Lord St. Aldwyn, nor did it with Mr. Goschen, nor the third Marquis of Salisbury. The latter had the power patent, but industriously stifled it. Whilst leader of his party it was necessary that he should be in pretty

regular attendance at the House of Lords, and once a year stand up in a great hall and hide his scorn of the class of mankind and womenfolk who wear the decoration of the Primrose League. On the whole, to put it in mildest measure, he hated his fellow-man, and would rather be a doorkeeper in the seclusion of Hatfield than dwell in the tents of London Society. Lord Randolph Churchill wielded the magic spell. So does Mr. Chamberlain; and so does the Earl of Rosebery.

Wherein Lord Rosebery excels is, that, whilst he is an attractive personality, whether in the frigid atmosphere of the House of Lords, at public dinner-tables in the metropolis, or on platforms in the provinces, he piques and pleases the popular fancy by a certain attribute of mystery. The Man in the Street, the most potent factor in English politics, plumes himself on knowing everything. That conceded, he likes to feel himself almost baffled by a particular study. This is daily provided for him in the problem, What is Lord Rosebery going to do? When in 1904 the fall of the Unionist Government was imminent the question on everybody's lips was, Will he, when the trumpet sounds Dissolution, come to the front and lead a united and inspirited Liberal Party to victory? Or will he still dally in the grove, "letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'"; protesting he has no longer part or place in politics; occasionally, *à propos de bottes*, setting political parties by the ears with incisive speech? Assumption of an air of mystery is probably undesigned in the case of Lord Rosebery. At the same time, we reflect that it has always been effective, from the time of Mahomet, through the days of the first Napoleon, down to that of Disraeli.

Lord Rosebery's public career, as far as it has run, has been checkered by two circumstances—one absolutely, the other in great measure, beyond his control. If he had not had the misfortune to be born to the heritage of a peerage, his course would have been almost monotonously direct. He is essentially a House of Commons man, and, once elected to the Chamber, would have inevitably worked his way, against whatever odds, to the Premier's place. Debarred from access to the House of Commons, he has in other directions sedulously set himself to minimise the disqualification of his rank. The average peer is content to dwell apart, secure of a seat in the Legislature. Having, in most cases, adequate revenues, he really wants nothing from the common people, unless it be their obeisance. Since he was of sufficiently mature age to take part in public affairs, Lord Rosebery has shown himself as much drawn toward what Gladstone called the masses as Lord Salisbury held himself aloof.

He early achieved the renown of being the happiest, most effective after-dinner speaker of the day. In nine cases out of ten, post-prandial speeches involve the guests in an act of penance, for which retrospection of the menu does not provide adequate compensation. When the accustomed gloom is broken by a sparkling speech, they are grateful. In Lord Rosebery's case the pleasure is widely spread. Newspaper editors, with a keen eye for good copy, report his after-dinner speeches verbatim. Standing at a dinner-table talking to some four-score or ten-score diners-out, Lord Rosebery knows he has the nation listening at the doors.

Some speeches, whether delivered in Parliament or outside, are effective at the moment. Some read well in the papers. Some combine both attractions. Listening

to the Duke of Devonshire, yawning and groaning through a harangue in a half-empty and altogether sleepy House of Lords, one gains the idea that he is saying nothing rising above the level of the muddiest commonplace:—

> O the dreary, dreary moorland!
> O the barren, barren shore!

Many years ago, when the Duke was still with us in the Commons, I invented a story about him which found wide currency in an unconventional weekly journal. It was to the effect that, taking his hostess down to dinner on a night after he had made a long harangue in the House of Commons, she told him she heard he had yawned once or twice during his speech. "I cannot believe it possible," she persisted. "Ah," replied Lord Hartington, repressing a tendency to yawn at the very thought of the experience, "but you did not hear the speech." It is gratifying to a romancist to hear that the Duke of Devonshire has at this time of day honestly adopted the story as his own, and tells it against himself with good-humoured gusto. The fable has its only value as illustrating the effect upon an unprejudiced listener to the Duke's Parliamentary speeches. If, however, one takes up the *Times* of the next day and reads a more or less verbatim report of a speech of the Duke's, he will find it brimful of common sense, cogent in reasoning, imbued with a high tone of statesmanship.

To these qualities Lord Rosebery superadds the charm of graceful speech, in turn witty, pathetic, humorous, eloquent. The House of Lords is, on ordinary occasions, the dreariest assembly of mortal men save a shipwrecked crew foregathered on the

fifth day of debarkation on a desert island. Sometimes it rises to heights of oratory in which, reversing the ordinary position of things, it leaves the House of Commons in the second rank. Such a time was the day when both Houses met to mourn the death of Gladstone. In the House of Lords the Marquis of Salisbury led off the stately service of lamentation. He was followed in turn by the Leader of the Opposition, the Duke of Devonshire, speaking as representative of the Dissentient Liberals, and by Lord James of Hereford recalling the private memories of former days. All was admirably done, a worthy chorus to such a fame. Last of all came Lord Rosebery, walking up to the table from the bench below the Gangway, where he now sits in token of that renunciation of official life and Ministerial ambition over which the world ponders. Those who spoke before him—political adversary, faithful colleague, old familiar friend—dwelt, with the natural oratory born of genuine feeling, on the dead statesman's eloquence, his mighty work, the simplicity of his life. It was left for Lord Rosebery to make allusion to "the pathetic figure" seated by the coffin in the darkened room at Hawarden, "who for sixty years shared all the sorrows and joys of Mr. Gladstone's life; who shared his triumphs and cheered him under his defeats." I fancy that, in all the speeches made on that day, whether in Lords or Commons, this simple reference to Mrs. Gladstone more deeply touched the public than anything else said.

As is his custom, Lord Rosebery delivered this particular speech with but slight assistance from the few notes he laid before him on the table. In oratory, as in other arts, perfection is reached when effort is successfully concealed. Gladstone was one of the few statesmen

of recent times who were absolutely indifferent to opportunity for preparation of their speeches. In fact, in the House of Commons he was often at his best when quite unexpectedly dragged into debate without a note of preparation. Doubtless Lord Rosebery is not altogether guiltless of preparing in advance the sparkling impromptus he flashes through his speeches, whether on the political platform or in the lighter entertainment of after-dinner oratory. Gifted with a remarkably well-trained memory, he is spared the dead-weight of notes which burdened Sir William Harcourt when, on great occasions, he addressed the House of Commons, pouring forth a wealth of epigram carrying with it unmistakable perfume of the New Forest, whose quiet glades lie contiguous to his country home at Malwood. If, as a matter of precaution and in token of respect for his audience, Lord Rosebery does frame in advance the main structure of his speech, he quickly seizes occasions to show that he is not dependent upon the equivalent to the midnight lamp for inspiration. Many of the best things in his speeches are flashed forth either in retort to interruption from a voice in the crowd or in passing reply to a speaker who has preceded him.

Other natural gifts conducive to success in oratory, are a pleasing presence, a far-reaching, melodious voice, and an effective delivery. He is one of perhaps half a dozen members of the House of Lords who can, without visible effort, make themselves heard throughout a chamber singularly ill-fashioned in respect of acoustic properties. During the Midlothian campaigns I have heard him follow Gladstone in the effort to make his voice travel across the wide sea of upturned faces clustered round the platforms on which the awakened recluse of Hawarden thundered against Disraeli and

all his works. Lord Rosebery was second only to Gladstone in an attempt that would have foiled the majority of practised public speakers.

The other circumstance alluded to as adversely affecting Lord Rosebery's career was that which compelled his acceptance of the Premiership in immediate succession to Gladstone. It is commonly believed that this arrangement followed on the initiative of Gladstone. If this were true, it would naturally aggravate the resentment Sir William Harcourt was not careful to conceal. I have no personal knowledge of Lord Rosebery's desires or inclinations at this critical period. But I have good reason to know that it was not Gladstone but the Queen herself who brought about an order of things that, quite undesignedly, wrought evil consequences to the Liberal Party. The popular tendency to see Gladstone's handiwork in the matter is born of a speech he made during one of the Midlothian campaigns, which was construed as nominating his host of the day his successor in the Premiership. Gladstone doubtless saw the inevitableness of the event. It did not necessarily follow from what he said that he contemplated immediate succession. It was the Queen who, on receiving final intimation of Gladstone's retirement from office, exercised her undoubted prerogative, and called Lord Rosebery to the vacant place of the First Minister of the Crown.

Amongst Gladstone's colleagues in the Cabinet there was highly favoured another disposition of offices that would have worked admirably. It would certainly have prevented the start of the rivulet which, in course of time broadening to an angry river, led, first, to Lord Rosebery's retirement from official connection with the Liberal Party, next, to the secession of Sir William

Harcourt and Mr. John Morley. The proposal was to make Lord Spencer Prime Minister—a well-merited reward of faithful and conspicuous service to the party. Lord Rosebery was designated to preside at the Foreign Office; Sir William Harcourt to serve as Home Secretary, with the Lead of the House of Commons. Had that scheme been carried out, there would have been no Death Duties Budget, nor means provided for a Unionist Government to subsidise landlords and Church schools, to spend two hundred and fifty millions sterling on the Boer War, and to play nap with the Continental Powers in the matter of the Army and Navy. But Downing Street would have been a quieter place of residence in 1894-95. There would have been no occasion to clutch at a snap vote in the House of Commons as an excuse for ending an intolerable state of affairs by a Dissolution; and when, in the ordinary course of time, a General Election became inevitable, the Liberal Party would have been led to battle under firm and united generalship.

It is, however, of little avail discussing what might have been. Of more importance is the question, What part will Lord Rosebery play in the future of Imperial Politics? He is almost effusively ready to answer "None." He has exiled himself from the Front Bench in the House of Lords. He ostentatiously avoids participation in political gatherings. If he be drawn on to the skirts of one, he never omits to preface his remarks with the reminder that he is a statesman retired from business, that he has washed his hands of politics, and that upon any burning question of the hour neither Trojan nor Tyrian must expect counsel, support, or criticism from him. All the same, his speech, reported in full in the papers the next day,

concentrates upon it the attention of the political world, and is made the text of innumerable leading articles.

That is a significant and enviable position for a statesman to fill. It is a truism that no public speaker, whether in office or on the Opposition Benches, has more influence in moving and in moulding public opinion than has our retired statesman. The uniqueness of the position is attested by the fact that he is scarcely less influential in the Unionist camp than he is among his own people. In the spring of 1898, when, according to the bluntly expressed opinion of his followers, Lord Salisbury was muddling matters in the Far East, it is scarcely exaggeration to say that Lord Rosebery held the fate of the Ministry in the palm of his hand. Had he emerged from his retirement, taken his place in the House of Lords, and pegged away at Lord Salisbury's foreign policy, as twenty years earlier Gladstone hammered at Lord Beaconsfield's, he might not perhaps have turned the Government out, but they would have been saved only by altering their policy in accordance with his views. It is no secret that, at the time, Lord Rosebery was approached by various influential sections of the Liberal Party, and besought to emerge from his tent and declare himself on Lord Salisbury's policy, of late crowned by the acquisition by Russia of Talien-wan. He clung tenaciously to his policy of silence; and Lord Salisbury lived to acquire Wei-hai-wei.

One danger lurking round Lord Rosebery's pathway to the Premiership is, that he may too long maintain the attitude of aloofness which up to now has admirably served. He who will not when he may sometimes finds he cannot when he would. One night during the last

Parliament, Mr. Gibson Bowles, forcing a division in Committee of Ways and Means, found himself leading a single follower out of the Lobby. Meeting him riding in the Park next morning, Lord Rosebery said, "I congratulate you on your party of One. It is one more than mine." That was witty. But there are some prizes in life worth more than the success of a jest. Lord Rosebery, if he really means business, is too wise a man to miss the opportunity of clenching it.

Someone has said that genius is really capacity for hard work. If that be so Lord Rosebery's genius must be admitted, for, like the first Napoleon, he toils terribly. This capacity, and even liking, for hard work is the indispensable complement of statesmen in the front rank. One generally begins to make his mark by being a talker; if he is to reach the topmost flight he must also be a worker. Mr. Bright was a great orator, but his occasional terms of administration were not marked by a measure of success equal to that achieved by less famous predecessors or successors. Lord Rosebery shares Gladstone's dual gift; being a charming speaker and a tireless worker. It was characteristic of him that when the London County Council was formed he cordially accepted an invitation to act as Chairman. The post was not for him attractive from any point of view. It simply meant drudgery, submitted to in unattractive circumstances among uninspiring company. Having decided to undertake the task, he gave himself up to it with uncompromising assiduity. He laboured early, late, and every day. His appearance in the chair at the ordinary meetings was duly noted in the public prints. Few save those of his own household knew of his constant attendance upon committee work, or of his habit of taking home portions of tasks which a long day

had not seen completed. Probably none but he could have licked into shape the heterogeneous conglomeration that was the first London County Council. Certainly no statesman of his standing was ready to take off his coat for the work. His Chairmanship was a happy thing for the County Council, a distinct service to municipal interests. He had some reward from the fact that the severe training undergone in this connection prepared him for higher duties.

Lord Rosebery's experience of the Premiership was brief, on the whole not happy. The majority of forty gained by Gladstone at the poll of 1892 and lamented by him as "too small, too small!" was bequeathed to his successor smaller still. It was moreover rent with internal schism. The section represented by Mr. Labouchere which resented the appointment of a peer as Premier, remained implacable. Moreover the Cabinet itself was not what might be accurately described as a happy family. Sir William Harcourt not unjustly, or unnaturally, regarded himself as slighted when his former subordinate at the Home Office, one much his junior in years, was placed over his head as Prime Minister. It was not an arrangement of Lord Rosebery's personal seeking. Nevertheless there was some justification for the anger of the veteran statesman who fought in the ranks when the new Premier was in petticoats, and slowly won his way upward at the sacrifice of private fortune and the cost of incessant labour in the party cause.

"There are," Lord Rosebery once said to me, "two supreme pleasures in a man's life. One is ideal; the other real. The ideal joy is when a man receives the seals of office at the hands of his Sovereign; the real pleasure comes when he carries them back." The real

pleasure was thrust upon Lord Rosebery in circumstances that cast a flood of light upon the hand-to-mouth existence of his Administration. On a Friday night in June, little more than twelve months after he had assumed the Premiership, the blow fell, not exactly a bolt out of the blue since the Cabinet knew nothing of cerulean atmosphere, but with a suddenness calculated to take the breath away. It is one of the little ironies of life that Lord Rosebery's Government was thrown out upon a charge of neglecting to have a full supply of cordite, the vote being moved by a young Member to whom the successful manœuvre opened the pathway to the War Office, his colleagues and himself being seven years later convicted by evidence given before a Royal Commission of sending a British Army into the field in South Africa bereft of the elementary necessaries of warfare.

By a happy accident it chanced I had opportunity of adding to my studies of Prime Ministers the greatest of Liberal Premiers at the moment he heard what had befallen his successors. In this month of June, 1894, Gladstone accepted an invitation from Sir Donald Currie to voyage in the *Tantallon Castle* for the ceremony of the opening of the Kiel Canal performed by the German Emperor. We were at Gothenburg when a cable message announced the defeat of the Government on the night of the 21st of June. The message was so muddled up with the resignation of the Duke of Cambridge that its bearing was not clear. Certainly there was no answer to the question, Would Ministers resolve to resign or carry on, ignoring a chance division on a side issue? This problem was discussed by politicians on board, Members of both Houses of Parliament. Between Gothenburg and

Gravesend there was no news or means of obtaining it. On the Monday morning, when the *Tantallon Castle* anchored off Gravesend, a bundle of papers were brought on board and eagerly grabbed by the guests.

Only Gladstone sat indifferent, more concerned about his breakfast bacon than with the fate of Ministries. Offered a first pull from the precious bundle of papers, he looked unaffectedly bored at the whole subject. After a moment's hesitation he took up the first paper to hand and walked off to his state cabin on deck. The news would keep till he had settled down in his arm-chair by the table on which were his Danish dictionary, and the book in his latest acquired language which with its assistance he was already able to read. Before he got half-way up the companion way a former private secretary went tumbling after him with the portentous news that the Government had resigned. "Eh?" said Gladstone, making use of the Lancashire exclamation which constantly came to his tongue after a space of more than eighty years, "It is very serious."

That was his sole remark. He slowly continued his journey to his cabin where, seated by the open door, he spread out his morning paper and learned all that was to be told of an accident that led to renewed frustration of the Liberal Party, in its completeness recalling Disraeli's triumph in 1874, or the overwhelming success of the Unionist Party at the General Election of 1886.

Here was the pleasing picture, life-size, of the Prime Minister retired from business. In obedience to his own injunction set forth in the peroration of a historical speech, he had been wise and wise in time. Had he not retired from the political arena at the close of the long Session that saw his second Home Rule Bill carried through the Commons and hewed in pieces

before the Lords, he would have found himself at the close of his little holiday in the Baltic face to face with fresh stupendous contest. As things were, he might read his morning paper with the comfort and healthy interest of a man who had no responsibility for Ministerial action, no personal interest in the course of political events. Not for him any more anxious confabulation with Cabinet colleagues faced by crisis. Not for him anxious arrival at momentous decision. No more Midlothian campaigns, nor any more the anxious watching of a rising or falling poll with the alternative issue of embarking once more on a troubled Ministerial voyage or drifting out to the havenless sea of Opposition.

Any chagrin Lord Rosebery and his colleagues may have felt at their defeat on a trumpery side issue unexpectedly sprung on a half-empty House, was lessened by reflection that if they had not been blown up by cordite they would have been strangled by those of their own household on the Education question. If they had not gone out on Friday they would have been summarily dismissed on Monday. On this latter night the Welsh Church Bill was down for Committee. For this boon Nonconformity had long toiled. Upon it the Ministry had staked their existence, A faction of the Welsh Members, not satisfied upon a particular point, were resolved to wreck the measure. With it would founder the Ministry and the Liberal undertakings with which their argosy was freighted. Better to be buffeted in the face by the enemy than be stabbed in the back by a nominal friend. All things considered, there probably was not on any railway in the kingdom a happier, lighter-hearted group of men than that which, exactly seven days after Mr. Brodrick's cordite motion had been carried in Committee of

Supply, went down to Windsor to return their seals into the Queen's hand.

Relieved of the cares of office, Lord Rosebery, in accordance with custom, led his little flock across the floor of the House of Lords and took his seat as Leader of the Opposition. Under the happiest possible circumstances of domestic felicity, the position of Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords is profoundly depressing. Lord Rosebery has himself graphically described the scene and the situation. "On the Conservative side of the House," he said, "you will see huddled together five hundred peers, or as many as think fit to attend, ranged in order of battle. On the other side you will discover, sparsely sprinkled over the ocean of red benches, some miserable twenty or thirty Liberals."

It is hard to say whether for a Liberal Prime Minister this state of things is more direful when he is in power or in Opposition. In the latter case the minority at least find themselves in their proper place, to the left of the Woolsack, comforted by contemplation of the Bishops, who have this in common with the Irish Members in the other House that, whatever party be in power, they retain their old places. When, as happened after the General Election of 1892 and again in 1906, the "miserable twenty or thirty Liberal peers" cross to the Ministerial side it was ludicrous to note the impotence of what was nominally the dominant party in the State. *Ex officio* Lord Rosebery was during his Premiership the Leader of the House. Actually Lord Salisbury was as completely arbiter of its decrees as when he filled the seat of the Prime Minister. Lord Rosebery had experience of both conditions. He had been beaten as Leader of the House, trounced as Leader

of the Opposition. Under either form of adversity he bore himself with a courage and good humour that established his personal authority.

After the experience of a Session and a half as Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords, in colleagueship with Sir William Harcourt occupying similar position in the Commons, Lord Rosebery startled the world and appalled the Liberals by announcing his intention of withdrawing from official connection with the party. Thereafter, as he put it, he meant to plough his lonely furrow. On the assembling of Parliament for the Session of 1897 his new position was indicated by withdrawal to a corner seat below the Gangway. But though he might lay down the crown of the Leader of the Liberal Party he could not dispose of the sceptre that makes him the most powerful Liberal peer in the community. Lord Spencer, ever ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his party, nominally undertook the Leadership, being supported on either hand by colleagues in former Cabinets. Actually the representative of the Opposition sat in the corner separated by the breadth of the Gangway from old friends and companions dear. Now as then it is a bitter mockery of the pretensions of place and power to observe the differing aspects of the House of Lords, when the nominal Leader of the Opposition addresses it from the Front Bench, and when the unofficial peer below the Gangway abruptly rising advances to the table. Now that Lord Salisbury is no longer with us Lord Rosebery is the only peer who can fill the House and hold the audience in charmed attention.

Whilst Lord Granville led the Liberty Party in the Lords there was nothing more delightful in the proceedings of a Session than his occasional encounter with

Lord Salisbury. Both statesmen, personal friends, political adversaries of long standing, entered with zest into the tournament. They beamed at each other across the table with unbroken affability. All the same one or the other in due succession managed to "get home" with smart tap of polished rapier.

In this respect the conditions existing between the late Marquis of Salisbury and Lord Rosebery were not on that footing of equality essential to perfect success in Parliamentary encounter. By comparison with the Liberal peer Lord Salisbury was a venerable personage. In Parliament all Members stand on footing of equality. But there is instinctive disinclination to see a young man poking fun at his elder. Short of that offence there is verge and scope enough for pretty badinage. Lord Rosebery, a master of the art, did not when opportunity was tempting spare the veteran Marquis, who retorted with portentous gravity under whose cloud flashed the lightning of wit.

Lord Rosebery is almost the only peer who can fill the gilded Chamber with a ripple of laughter. Viscount Cross, who on a historic occasion, whilst he was yet with us in the Commons, "heard an honourable Member smile," has rarely in his loftier estate had his sensibilities ruffled by kindred phenomenon. Lord Rosebery can at will make their lordships smile, sometimes even—decorously, of course—laugh.

His lightness of touch in debate recalls Earl Granville at his best. Lord Granville was perhaps a little gentler when he smote. His inbred politeness, his constitutional suavity, prevented him from hurting a man however objectionable he might be personally or politically. He wrapped his bitter bolus in such abundance of sugary environment that the patient

almost liked it. Lord Rosebery, studiously polite in manner, and delicate in phrasing, has no such scruples. Witness the late Lord Brabourne, who in debate lamented the fact that he owed his coronet to the hand of Mr. Gladstone. Lord Rosebery's description of the new peer, "who wore his coronet as if it were a crown of thorns," hugely delighted the Conservative peers whom Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen, long time colleague in Liberal Ministries when he was in the Commons, on his translation promptly joined. In later years, in debate on an Irish Land Bill, Lord Rosebery turned upon a notoriously absentee Irish landlord who had at great length and with much acerbity denounced the measure, and blandly asked, "What does the noble lord know about Ireland?"

Lord Rosebery is one of the singularly few peers who do not find the acoustical defects of the House of Lords insuperable. Apparently making no special effort he is as distinctly heard as in an ordinary dining room. Wherein he has the advantage of the late Lord Granville, some of whose good things were lost to the world by reason of their not reaching the Press Gallery. Lord Rosebery's full rich voice has penetrated to the utmost recesses of the Waverley Corn Market in Edinburgh. His enunciation is slow, unvaried by haste. For one so quick-witted all his movements are deliberate, a peculiarity probably the result of inflexible self-control. He rarely attempts flights of oratory, whether in Parliament or on the platform. Occasionally, in manner reminiscent of his old master in the Commons, he bangs the table. As a rule he discards gestures. Deeply read in ancient and modern masters, his speeches on current politics have a satisfying literary flavour.

Lord Brougham confided to Macaulay's father the

interesting fact that he composed the peroration of his speech on the trial of Queen Caroline after spending three weeks in reading and reciting Demosthenes. Twenty times he re-wrote the passage before it satisfied his taste. What measure of preparation Lord Rosebery bestows upon his more important speeches is his personal secret. They are too weighty in matter, too polished in style to be "knocked off" at a quarter of an hour's notice. He has the art to conceal art, and looking and listening whilst he quietly, without assistance from notes, delivers a speech that charms the audience and is on the morrow eagerly read by a larger multitude waiting at the doors, no one suspects study of Demosthenes or the writing twenty times over of a carelessly dropped yet perfectly framed sentence.

Lord Rosebery has the natural tastes an exigeant British public demand in their prime favourites. He lives much in the country, hunts, shoots, farms, breeds cattle and horses, sometimes wins races, always runs straight whether on the turf or in politics. Latest of all he entered the field of authorship, astonishing the world with a monograph on Pitt that throws fresh light on a familiar face, and unconsciously forms a not less interesting study of a modern statesman who, hitherto missing some of Pitt's advantages and opportunities, has it yet in his power to come near to acquisition of his imperishable renown.

(5) MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR.

July, 1902—Jan., 1906.

I HAVE a copy of a snapshot photograph of Mr. Balfour, the enemy taking him unawares on the Golf Links. One knowing him in the House of Commons thinks wistfully how even better than his admirable best would be the result if sometime, when on the Front Opposition or the Treasury Bench, he looked as he does in this living picture. He has just delivered his stroke and with legs outstretched, his club uplifted at its final swing over his shoulder, he intently follows the flight of his speeding ball. All his soul is in the game. Every fibre of his body is intent as he watches the result of the stroke.

A certain tendency towards indolence, an unchecked intellectual impatience with mediocrity, a lack of sympathy with ordinary hum-drum business procedure, militate against his perfect success. Within a month of his undertaking the Leadership of the House of Commons at the opening of the Session in 1892, these influences, predominant, threatened collapse. There is no unwritten law of Parliamentary procedure more peremptory or more implacable than one which ordains that the Leader of the House of Commons shall, with brief interval for dinner, be in his place from the moment public business commences till the Speaker finally leaves the Chair. It is a hard rule, against which the eight-hour-a-day workman would lift up his heel.

Disraeli, bending under the weight of his three-score years and ten, observed it up to the last. So did Gladstone and W. H. Smith. Mr. Balfour took a different view of his duty. Lounging in when Questions were almost over, he left to his colleagues the task of answering those addressed to him personally. Moreover, like Charles Lamb at the India Office, habitually arriving late, he scrupulously made up for the dereliction of duty by going away early.

This disposition to delegate his work to colleagues cropping up in the last year of his Premiership led to a memorable scene of disorder. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman moved the adjournment with intent to extract from the Premier declaration of his latest attitude on the Fiscal Question. Mr. Balfour, ignoring the appeal, put up Mr. Alfred Lyttelton to reply. Thereupon broke forth an angry storm which, lasting for an hour, prevented all but the first three words of the Colonial Secretary's proposed speech being heard. "The Prime Minister," he said, and he said not any more. A storm of cries of "Balfour! Balfour!" broke over his astonished head. Waiting for something like a lull, he repeated, "The Prime Minister——" and the angry waters from the Opposition Benches came down on him like those of Lodore. For a full hour he stood at the table gallantly facing the storm. When he sat down he had not added a syllable to his three-word speech.

These habits, baleful in a Chief Secretary, when developed by a Prime Minister naturally led to complications in public business and occasional rebuff to the Ministry. There were signs of revolt in the well-disciplined ranks to the right of the Speaker. Mr. Balfour petulantly answered that if they didn't like his way of transacting business they must look out for

someone more suitable. This sounded like defiance, and was probably so meant. It actually covered departure on the road to amendment. Ten years later, when the newly installed Premier was in charge of the Education Bill, he in the closeness of attendance on debate almost emulated the illustrious examples cited. It is no easy task for any man to sit hour after hour listening to gentle dulness making long speeches, primarily designed for the edification of a distant constituency. To Mr. Balfour it is exquisite torture. Occasionally towards the end of the fifth or sixth hour he betrayed impatience by a gesture, more rarely by an exclamation. On the whole in these later years he bears his martyrdom with a smiling countenance.

His career in the House of Commons is as remarkable as the success that crowns it. A cadet of the House of Cecil, he was in 1874 returned for the pocket borough of Hertford. He was then in his 26th year and did not even affect appetite for the strong meat of party politics. In the memorable Parliament that first saw Disraeli in power as well as in office, he made no mark. The first public notice of him that lives in record is found in the *Diary of the Gladstone Parliament, 1880-85.* The quotation is a little hackneyed, cropping up in nearly every biographical study of the Premier. It may be new to some readers, and has at any rate the advantage of being penned at the current moment with freedom alike from party and personal prejudice.

"The Member for Hertford," I wrote under date 20th August, 1880, "is one of the most interesting young men in the House. He is not a good speaker, but he is endowed with the rich gift of conveying the impression that presently he will be a successful Parliamentary debater, and that in the meantime it is well

he should practise. He is a pleasing specimen of the highest form of culture and good breeding which stand to the credit of Cambridge University. He is not without desire to say hard things of the adversary opposite and sometimes yields to temptation. But it is ever done with such sweet and gentle grace, is smoothed over by such earnest protestation of innocent intention, that the adversary rather likes it than otherwise."

Mr. Balfour found his opportunity when, on the retirement of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach in 1887, he was appointed to the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland. The arrangement was, in political circles, regarded as one of those temporary dispositions of a difficult post which mark the embarrassment of a harried Premier. Some unexpected person is always being hurried off to the Chief Secretary's Lodge. The hapless Lord Frederick Cavendish was dispatched thither on the resignation of Mr. Forster. W. H. Smith held the post for a few weeks in search of an Irish policy for Lord Salisbury's First Administration. Though by favour of his uncle he had already occupied a seat in the Cabinet as Secretary for Scotland, Mr. Balfour had not developed any qualities that gave promise of his immediate future. The Irish Members laughed at his pretty ways, promising themselves the pleasure of making a short meal of him. They had driven W. E. Forster out of office, breaking his stout heart. They had turned George Trevelyan's hair grey in a Session. This slim young gentleman, with his languorous air, his boyish smile, his courteous manner, and his tendency to philosophical research, would scarcely make a mouthful.

Before the first Session of his Chief Secretaryship closed, the Irish Members perceived there had been a mistake somewhere. The dilettante stripling, who in

Fourth Party days used to lounge about the House, showing interest only when Lord Randolph Churchill was attacking somebody, within the bounds of a single Session developed into the hardest-worked Minister of the Crown, the deviser and stern executor of an Irish Policy as nearly Cromwellian as the prejudices of the nineteenth century permitted.

There is no instance in English political life of a still young man making such rapid advance to the front. Lord Randolph Churchill had a meteoric flight. But for several Sessions he had been steadily forcing himself into prominence before he blossomed into Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. Up to the day when all the world wondered at the news that Mr. Balfour was appointed Irish Secretary, he was a person of no political importance. His rising evoked no interest in the House. His name would not have drawn a full audience in St. James's Hall. Twelve months later, in rapidly increasing degree within two years, he gained for himself one of four principal places in Parliamentary debate, whilst his name was one to conjure with throughout the United Kingdom.

In my diary, under date August, 1890, I find the following entry: "In personal appearance and in manner no one could less resemble Cromwell than the present ruler of Ireland. To look at Mr. Balfour as he glides with undulous stride to his place in the House of Commons, one would imagine rather that he had just dropped in from an hour's exercise with the guitar than that he had been engaged all the morning in pursuit of his grim game with the Nationalist forces in Ireland. His movements are of almost womanly grace. His face is fair to look upon. When making slashing retort upon the enemy opposite he preserves an outer bearing

of almost deferential courtesy. Irish Members may, an they please, use the bludgeon of Parliamentary conflict. For him the polished, lightly-poised rapier suffices for all occasions. The contrast his unruffled mien presents to furious onslaughts of excitable persons like William O'Brien adds to the bitterness of the wormwood and gall his presence on the Treasury Bench mixes for Irish Members. But if he is hated by men, some of whom he has haled to prison, he is not merely feared. He exacts respect. In him is recognised the most perfect living example of the mailed hand under the velvet glove."

At the time Mr. Balfour was carrying everything before him at the Irish Office, the blameless, useful life of W. H. Smith, then Leader of the House of Commons, was drawing to a close. The young Irish Secretary was, save for one contingency, recognised as his inevitable successor. That contingency was the reinstatement of Lord Randolph Churchill. In the closing years of the Parliament elected in 1886 Lord Randolph sat on the corner bench immediately behind Ministers, almost literally a thorn in the side of placid, faithful W. H. Smith. There was as yet no sign of that physical and intellectual paralysis that a year or two later attacked him. Among an important section of the Conservative Party he was regarded with the lingering affection Napoleon's old soldiers cherished for the deposed Emperor. Lord Randolph had voluntarily retired to his Elba. Any day he might return, and the mediocrities on the Treasury Bench, with W. H. Smith at their head, would be crumpled up as were the Bourbons in 1813.

By curious coincidence, Mr. Balfour's predestined succession to the supreme position of Prime Minister

was, twelve years later, popularly regarded as obstructed by another candidate. This time it was Mr. Chamberlain. It was difficult for most people to realise the possibility of that masterful statesman consenting to play second fiddle to any man when the Premiership was left an open prize by the resignation of Lord Salisbury. There was every prospect of a scrimmage, and knowing ones offered odds on the Colonial Secretary. The inner circle of Mr. Chamberlain's friends, probably including Mr. Balfour himself, knew he was not in the running. Some years before opportunity befell, he made up his mind not to enter for the stakes of the Unionist Premiership. It happened when Mr. Balfour "walked over," Mr. Chamberlain was confined to his room, the victim of a cab accident. But in the chorus of enthusiastic applause which at the Foreign Office meeting in July, 1902, hailed Arthur Balfour as Prime Minister, no note rang louder or truer than the message sent by his alleged rival.

For those who have known him since he entered the House of Commons, now more than thirty years ago, it is marvellous to observe the supremacy Mr. Balfour has attained in debate. For some years during rare appearances on a scene for which he had rooted dislike, he sat silent. He came to the front with the birth of the Fourth Party, of which he became the odd man—"usually out," as Randolph Churchill said, noting his frequent absence from the post of duty. When he spoke it was with halting manner, varied by the complacency of the practitioner in the University debating room. To-day in the ranks of Parliamentary debaters he stands second only to Mr. Chamberlain at his best.

It must be admitted that in this respect he suffers from two constitutional weaknesses, which with any

other man would be fatal. He is not certain about facts, and is not safe with figures. When, during his Premiership, it fell to his lot to explain some complicated Bill or defend an intricate situation, the House watched him with amused interest. In such case he was usually flanked on either side by safe persons, like the Attorney-General and the Home Secretary. When he floundered over a fact or misquoted a figure the voice of his colleague was heard whispering correction. Then came a little comedy that never failed to bring down the House. Mr. Balfour, standing at the table, paused, looked round, and regarded his learned colleague with friendliest glance, in which shined perhaps the smallest glint of admonition. "Exactly," he said, nodding encouragingly. Then repeated his statement in corrected form.

Presently he stumbled again and correction was made. "Exactly," he repeated, turning round as before, though this time there was an inflection of sternness in his voice. There is a limit to toleration in these matters. The Attorney-General may be forgiven if he blunders once; but he mustn't go on stumbling. That was the impression subtly conveyed to the delighted House by Mr. Balfour's countenance and inflection of voice. It was not he who had blundered but the Attorney-General, and his "Exactly," was designed as a friendly shield to cover his colleague from the resentment of the audience.

Long and constant practice, keen intelligence, a ready wit and imperturbable presence of mind carried Mr. Balfour through many difficulties born of the weakness indicated. If facts were indisputably against the Government on a particular issue, he simply ignored them. A memorable instance of his audacity in this

direction happened in the spring of '98. In response to remonstrance from St. Petersburg, British men o' war despatched to Port Arthur had been withdrawn. The Conservative rank and file were in a state of seething discontent. Lord Charles Beresford, speaking from behind the Treasury Bench, was loudly cheered when he protested that "the incident was one of the most humiliating things that had happened in English history." Sir William Harcourt, swift to see the opportunity of dealing a damaging blow at the Ministry, took in hand the Blue Book just issued and strung together a choice collection of compromising passages.

When Mr. Balfour rose to reply the crowded House pulled itself together eager to learn how he would meet these awkward facts. He didn't meet them at all. He ignored the text of the despatches just published by the Foreign Office, and airily declined to follow Sir William Harcourt through his extracts and his commentary thereupon.

But there was the withdrawal of the fleet from Port Arthur. He really must say something about that. It was, he casually explained, all due to the Admiral in command. In the ordinary process of moving about British ships a certain number had, at a particular moment, been ordered to proceed to Port Arthur. It was true this concentration of naval forces had taken place concurrently with a rumour that Russia was about to annex that station. Some time after, again in the ordinary process, the British ships were ordered to withdraw from Port Arthur. Here again he admitted there was curious concatenation of circumstances. Just before the ships were ordered to withdraw, Russia had protested against their presence. A mere coincidence.

The whole process was, in fact, so simple as to be almost automatic. You dropped a penny in the slot, represented by the mouth of the Admiral, and he issued commands for the assembling of the squadron at Port Arthur. After brief interval you put in another penny and he ordered them to withdraw. That was all.

It is one of the most striking evidences of the personal position of Mr. Balfour in the House of Commons that this elaborate fooling, carried on with every appearance of honest conviction, did not excite a howl of derision. Members only smiled, and the Ministerial majority in the subsequent division was not reduced by more than half a dozen.

On higher flights of oratory Mr. Balfour soars with strong, steady wing. One of the most difficult things in a Parliamentary career is to compose and deliver a ceremonial speech, whether in praise of the living or in lament for the dead. Sir William Harcourt never shone in this light, under which Gladstone stood supreme. Mr. Balfour invariably rises to the occasions, saying the right thing in the most appropriate phrase.

None who heard it will forget his speech when, on the death of Gladstone, the House of Commons became for the nonce a house of mourning. The effort was more triumphant since he rose from a sick bed to make it. Death is, after all, so common an event, that eulogists must repeat themselves even when they hymn the praises of the supremely great. Mr. Balfour succeeded in imparting some felicitous new turns into his monody. Particularly beautiful was the passage wherein he lamented the hopelessness of attempt to reconstruct from ordinary records living memories of Gladstone's greatest Parliamentary triumphs.

"The words," he said, "are there, lying side by side

with the utterances of lesser men in an equality as of death. But the spirit, the fire, the inspiration, are gone. He who alone could revive them has alas! been taken away."

These adjuncts are also lacking to the printed page on which the sentence is recalled. What will be missed by the reader is the solemn scene in the thronged, historic Chamber; the funereal garb worn by all; the attitude of intense listening; the tall, graceful, still youthful figure standing with bowed head at the table; and by it, clear to the mind's eye, the wraith of the stately presence that through more than two generations of Parliament men dominated and elevated the House of Commons.

Politics apart, Arthur Balfour and Gladstone—Youth and Age—were allied by closest intellectual and artistic sympathies. Each ungrudgingly admired the other. In the House of Commons a strongly marked difference is asserted by the terms in which one Member alludes to another. On either side a Minister or ex-Minister is accustomed to speak of a follower, however obscure, as "my honourable friend." If the Member alluded to be seated opposite, he is mentioned as "the honourable gentleman." With Gladstone, even in the heat of acrimonious debate, Arthur Balfour was to the last "my right honourable friend," an exceedingly rare distinction shared in earlier times only by Stafford Northcote.

Upon the secession from the Cabinet of Mr. Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire in 1903, Mr. Balfour's Ministry became more than ever a one-man Administration. Almost in equal degree, though in varying fashion, the Premier centered upon himself the attention of the House and the country as in their time did Disraeli and Gladstone. Towards the end it came

to be the fashion at the clubs to accuse him of failure as a Leader of the House of Commons. Certainly, if success in that office be measured by the number of Bills added to the Statute Book in the course of a Session, failure must be admitted. With supreme intellectual gifts, Mr. Balfour lacks something of the qualities of a business man, notable, for example, in the character of his predecessor, William Henry Smith. Mr. Smith got Bills through. Mr. Balfour witches the House with grace of manner, extorts admiration by the dexterity with which he skates over thin ice. Turning over the ledger of the Session in search of business done, the record is disappointingly brief.

During the last three years of his Premiership, Mr. Balfour found himself handicapped by a state of things for the initiation of which at least he had no responsibility. Possibly with the advantage of retrospection he may be convinced that it would have been better alike in the interests of himself and the Unionist Party, had he put his foot down when Mr. Chamberlain first raised the flag of Preferential Tariffs, plainly declaring that he would hold no truck with Protection. A mind constitutionally prone to subtleties, a disposition that shrank from open hostility to an old colleague, led him into the dubious course that marked his attitude on the question. He tried to walk on both sides of the road, declaring against taxation of food, whilst protesting that, after all, there could be no harm in inquiry into the bearings of Free Trade at the commencement of a new century.

This concatenation of circumstances created perennial difficulty, through which he steered with brave assumption of light-heartedness. In a familiar passage in his "Life of Lord George Bentinck," Disraeli describes Peel sitting on the Treasury Bench watching the flower of

his party pass by to join in the Division Lobby the Opposition bent on wrecking his Ministry. So time after time, during the last three Sessions of his Premiership, Mr. Balfour saw a section of his following, important by reason of character and intellect, withdraw from his side when the question at issue involved the sanctity of the principle of Free Trade. The conclusion of the matter was frankly set forth by Lord Londonderry addressing a meeting of Primrose Leaguers gathered in the autumn of 1905 in his Northumberland park. "I do not hesitate to say," he declared, "that if the dissentients from the ranks of the Unionist Party over the fiscal question are allowed to continue to slip away, we must look forward to the next General Election with feelings of the greatest possible apprehension." Never in the history of British politics was a gloomy forecast more abundantly fulfilled.

The most striking, perhaps the most widely pleasing, development of the Session of 1907 was the resuscitation of the Leader of the Opposition. The opening weeks, even months, of the first Session of the new Parliament saw what many lamented as the Passing of Arthur. Before its close he had come again, bringing his sheaves with him. The situation in which he found himself in February, 1906, was not uncommon in the career of Prime Ministers. Gladstone suffered it in 1874, again more severely in 1886. Disraeli escaped personal contact with the altered conditions in the Commons by timeously fleeing to the House of Lords. Mr. Balfour, stepping out of the House in August, 1905, master of legions, autocrat of State affairs, was himself whelmed in the rush of the democratic torrent. Returning after many days, he found a remnant of his shattered host strategically spread over the Opposition benches with amiable

design to endow them with appearance of being garrisoned.

Therein he shared the common fate of Premiers unhorsed at the polls. But whilst the rout was, by comparison with his former standing, exceptionally complete, there were circumstances of a personal character that made the situation more than usually irksome. The ex-Premier came back not only to find his well-disciplined majority transformed into an impotent and disheartened minority. He was faced by the discovery that Parliamentary mental habits and social manners were revolutionised.

The General Election of January of 1906 did more than dismiss a Ministry and appoint successors. It largely changed the tone and character of the Assembly. It was in degree, *longo intervallo*, like the sweeping away of the light-hearted gay-mannered Court of Louis XVI. and the substitution of a grim Committee of Public Safety. In the Parliament he had dissolved the Premier was idolised, scarcely less by the Opposition than by his own party. They laughed responsive to his lightest joke. They watched with friendly interest those outbursts of "urbane effrontery," which, in the enforced leisure of retirement from the Parliamentary scene, Lord Hugh Cecil half admiringly recalled. Even when strategy took the quaint form of leading his men out of the House when the Opposition wanted to talk about Tariff Reform, resentment did not take other form than that of good-natured banter.

Coming back to the old familiar scene, Member for the City of London by grace of a loyal follower of happier days, Mr. Balfour discovered a new world. Stout Cortez, with eagle eyes staring at the Pacific, was not more amazed than he when, from the unfamiliar

position to the left of the Speaker, he looked across and beheld the serried ranks which mustered C.-B.'s amazing majority. Interest and surprise were mutual. With characteristic pluck Mr. Balfour at the outset practised as Leader of the Opposition the arts and graces that found favour in the eyes of the Assembly in which he long figured as Premier. The Labour Members and the hard-headed traders representing big constituencies looked on with unconcealed disappointment, not free from contempt. Before they came to Westminster they had heard much of the irresistible manner of Prince Arthur, of his courtly grace smoothing the sharp points of supreme debating power. Was this really the man? Was this the Parliamentary Helen of long tradition?

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burned the topmost towers of Ilium?

They turned away with frank gesture of impatience. After listening for a while with puzzled countenances they either left the House or began to talk to each other.

This chilling reception had its immediate effect upon the Leader of the Opposition. Through the first half of the Session he was plainly ill at ease. The situation was not made more endurable by the preference openly displayed by the Radical and Labour Members for the discourses of Mr. Chamberlain. They distrusted, even hated, their lost Leader. At least they understood him, admired his fashion of going direct to the heart of the subject under discussion, dealing with it in sharply biting phrases. It was after Mr. Chamberlain's withdrawal from the scene that Mr. Balfour bucked up, setting himself with quiet, unflagging, assiduity to the task of recapturing his old position. Naturally the

House in its new conditions was not attractive to him. Apart from its unsympathetic atmosphere, there was the weariness of being monotonously beaten in any division that might be challenged. There was, however, only one way to victory, and he doggedly followed it. He was constantly in his place, early and late, ready to interpose wherever opening was left for attack. He abandoned the lighter manner suitable for sunny days, assuming a tone and attitude of grave seriousness when he rose to take part in debate.

Before the Session closed he regained much of his former foothold. The end of the second Session saw him fully re-established. His manner of speech gradually recurred to its ancient quality, in which good temper prevails. So light and subtle was his play with the rapier that right honourable gentlemen opposite did not know they had been pinked till they found the blood trickling down. New Members were unconsciously educated up to his methods and manner, and began to enjoy it equally with predecessors in former Parliaments.

That manner maketh the man is not the whole truth. But charm of manner, the outcome of innate good breeding and a chivalrous nature, has undoubtedly, *avant garde* of sterner qualities, weightier merits, done much to secure for Arthur Balfour the unique position he to-day holds in the most critical Assembly in the world.

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CHAPTER II.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

THERE was something profoundly pathetic in the published accounts of the home-coming of Mr. Chamberlain at Midsummer, 1907, after long stay on the Riviera in search of health and strength. The shock was sharper for those long familiar with his virile form, his long, quick stride, his forceful advance along any pathway on which he found himself. It was pitiful to think of the slow dragging of the partially paralysed figure across the railway station, and the gallant but futile attempt to raise his hat in response to the cheer with which he was greeted. His return was evidently hastily determined upon. Only a week earlier official notice was circulated of prolongation of his stay in the south of France. In this sudden home-coming there was something painfully suggestive of the action of the wounded lion, feeling the hand of death upon it, making its way back to its lair. Birmingham was not Mr. Chamberlain's birthplace. But it has been his home from early manhood, and for it he cherished undying affection. He had his house in London. His home has always been at Highbury, albeit what was once a country residence is now closely environed by the ever-broadening town. When John Bright was offered a honorific distinction, he, quoting the words of the Shunammite woman, answered: "I dwell among my own people." Mr. Chamberlain's own people are not found

among the brilliant throng to which he won his way in London. They still live in Birmingham and he was happiest when he dwelt amongst them.

The simple story of the tragic condition of the veteran fighter created a widespread feeling of sympathy. A hard hitter, under whatsoever flag he ranged himself, Mr. Chamberlain all his life evoked personal hostility in peculiar force of acrimony. He rather welcomed than resented its manifestation, feeling a joyous confidence that he was able to give as much as he took. In presence of the stroke that befel him, at a time when he was still talking hopefully of the final success of his last and most arduous campaign, political animosity was hushed. If it had been possible to contemplate his return to the Parliamentary scene, which for more than a quarter of a century he dominated and from time to time profoundly stirred, it would have been safe to predict a warmth of reception rarely paralleled. There was little hope that opportunity would present itself. All that members could do was to talk in whispers kindly of the stricken warrior.

It was in 1874 that Mr. Chamberlain began to loom large beyond the boundary of Birmingham. In that year the Prince and Princess of Wales, now their gracious Majesties, visited the Midland Metropolis. Mr. Chamberlain was Mayor, and people who did not know him busied themselves in speculating how he would in his official capacity get along with the Heir Apparent. It happened about that date there was crudescence of what some people were pleased to hail as Republicanism. In the preceding Session of the House of Commons there had been a memorable scene of disorder presaging on other lines the triumphs of the party led by Mr. Parnell, cheered on by Mr. Biggar. In Committee of

Ways and Means Sir Charles Dilke called attention to the Civil List of Queen Victoria and it was arranged that his amendment for the reduction of the Vote should be seconded by Mr. Auberon Herbert. Sir Charles managed amid angry interruptions to work off his speech. Mr. Herbert, uprising to second the amendment, raised a storm of resentment that made his sentences inaudible. This was the occasion when, according to malicious report current at the day, the late Mr. Cavendish Bentinck—Little Ben, as he was called to distinguish him from his larger namesake—"went out behind the Speaker's Chair and crowed thrice." Certainly there was uproar unfamiliar in those days. A shame-faced Member, anxious for the dignity of the House, called attention to the presence of strangers, and, in accordance with regulation then in force, the galleries were forthwith cleared.

In those far-off days Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke were drawn together by community of political feeling and instinct of friendship. A phrase, dropped by Sir Charles in a speech delivered in the North of England, was construed as proclaiming Republican principles. The Mayor of Birmingham was vaguely mixed up with this alleged propaganda, and when it was announced that the Prince and Princess of Wales were to be his official guests at Birmingham the nation was inflamed with curiosity as to what might happen.

I well remember the episode, since it was the occasion of my personal introduction to a statesman whose personality has ever fascinated me. It happened that about this time Mr. Chamberlain, at the invitation of Mr. John Morley, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, with all his days before him, little dreaming where and how their afternoon would be spent, contributed to the pages of

that periodical drastic criticism of Mr. Forster's Education Bill. Mr. Frank Hill, one of the most brilliant journalists of the last half-century, then editor of the *Daily News*, did not vary in extreme degree from the majority who did not personally like Mr. Forster. Indeed he once described him in illuminating phrase as "the best stage Yorkshireman of the day." But he liked the Mayor of Birmingham less. What was this provincial person doing meddling with imperial concerns that were better controlled from Bouverie Street? In his trenchant style, and at its prime there was nothing better in journalism, Frank Hill "went for" Mr. Chamberlain and his *Fortnightly Review* article. Even in those comparatively salad days Mr. Chamberlain was not disposed to take attack lying down. In a subsequent number of the *Fortnightly* he turned and rent not only Frank Hill, but the hapless *Daily News*.

From this war of the giants I, a pigmy, suffered. Going down to Birmingham, as special correspondent of the *Daily News* to describe the proceedings in connection with the Royal visit, I called upon the Mayor in whom, before I had been a day in the borough, I recognised the hub of this Midland universe. My business was to ask for the customary facilities for doing the work of a recorder of current events. Over the waste of thirty-three years I recall the keen face looking through a rimless eyeglass at the special correspondent of the *Daily News*. At the moment I realised what must have been the feeling of Jacob Marley's ghost when Mr. Scrooge, all on a Christmas Eve, looked through him and saw the brass buttons on the back of his frock coat. With that icy frankness with which in years to come he chilled not only hostile Ministers but esteemed colleagues, his Worship asked me how I could

suppose a representative of the *Daily News* had any claim on him for personal assistance? I reminded him that I had nothing to do with these wars of the Titans. I was, if I may in this connection use the phrase without offence, "a struggling journalist" to whom had been entrusted the commission of presenting a more or less pictorial account of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Then came the occasionally familiar radiant smile on his face. I do not think that as it came to pass there was any representative of the London Press who was provided with fuller or more generous facilities for doing his work than was the special correspondent of the obnoxious *Daily News*.

What in some quarters was jubilantly regarded as a pitfall for the Mayor of Birmingham turned out to be an astounding triumph. To begin with, under his supreme capacity as administrator the details of what might have been a tumultuous assembly resolved themselves into an orderly and enthusiastic reception. Mr. Chamberlain's speeches in welcoming the Royal guests were a happy amalgam of political independence and the courtesy of a host. The Prince of Wales could not have been ignorant of the peculiarities of the situation. The manner in which they were controlled laid the foundation of a friendly intimacy deepened in subsequent Royal relations with a Minister of State.

Mr. Chamberlain was in his thirty-eighth year when, by this accidental concatenation of circumstance, he leaped into the saddle. Two years later he entered the House of Commons as Member for Birmingham. His advent created a flutter of excitement. I quote a note from my diary of the date, 17th February, 1877 :—

"It would be interesting to know exactly what

impression Sir Walter Barttelot, a Tory Baronet of the old school, formed of Chamberlain's probable appearance and manner before he had the pleasure of meeting him face to face in the House of Commons. He had evidently evolved some fancy picture, for his surprise to-night at seeing the junior member for Birmingham in a coat, and even a waistcoat, hearing him speak good English in a quiet undemonstrative manner, was undisguised. It is reported that Sir Walter expected that this fearsome Radical would enter the House making a cart-wheel down the floor, like ragged little boys do adown the pavement when a drag or an omnibus passes.

"The good Baronet's acquaintance with the forms of the House convinced him that there would be no use in Chamberlain's presenting himself in his shirt sleeves and with a short clay pipe in his mouth. But on the score of waistcoats there is no Standing Order, and the Radical might, if he pleased, have paid the necessary homage to respectability by buttoning his coat across his chest, whilst he gratified his natural instincts by dispensing with the superfluity of a waistcoat.

"When, therefore, there uprose from a bench below the Gangway opposite, a slightly-made, youthful, almost boyish-looking man, with a black coat fearlessly unbuttoned to display the waistcoat and disclose the shirt-collar and necktie, Sir Walter began to stare and to cast side glances at that other great legislator, Colonel Corbett, in startled endeavour to know what he thought of *this?* Moreover, the Radical wore, not spectacles with tin or brass rims as Felix Holt would have done had his sight been impaired, but an eyeglass! Positively an eyeglass, and as far as one might judge looking across the House, an eyeglass framed in precisely the same style as that which Colonel Corbett himself

wears when his good-humoured face is turned towards a distant object. Surprise deepened when the Radical, in a low, clear, admirably pitched voice, with a manner self-possessed without being self-assertive, proceeded to discuss the Prisons Bill, opposing it on the very lines which Sir Walter himself had made his *Torres Vedras* when he besieged the Bill last Session.

"This was remarkable, but there was only one thing for an English gentleman to do, and that Sir Walter promptly did. He rose when Chamberlain sat down, and, awkwardly conscious of disguising his cart-wheel and no-waistcoat theory, held out over the heads of Henley and Beresford Hope the right hand of fellowship to the Radical Member for Birmingham.

"It was an affecting scene. Beholding it, one forgot the comic element and the hidden similitude to the graciously condescending reception by a Mandarin of a barbarian from London or Paris whom he has discovered does not go about with his head under his arm, nor lunch off the broiled bones of his neighbours' children. When, sixty years ago, Lord Amherst visited Pekin as an Ambassador, the 'Brother of the Moon' then reigning sent him back to the Prince Regent with the laconic epistle: 'I have sent thine ambassadors back to their own country without punishing them for the high crime they have committed.' Barttelot was even kinder in his treatment of the barbarian from the Black Country.

"'If the hon. Member for Birmingham,' he said, 'will always address the House with the same quietness, and the same intelligence displayed on this occasion, I can assure him the House of Commons will always be ready to listen to him.'"

At this time of day it is odd to think of Sir Walter

Barttelot patronising Mr. Chamberlain. The incident is useful as describing the position of affairs at this date.

Mr. Chamberlain entered upon Parliamentary life at a historical epoch in the career of both political parties. The death of Lord Palmerston in 1865 relieved the Liberals from an incubus of something approaching Toryism. The General Election of 1868 gave Gladstone a free hand for those colossal reforms touching the Irish Church, and the Irish land, which marked the revivification of the Liberal Party. By 1873 the flush of energy was spent and there followed the revulsion of feeling tenderly known to the party at the time out of power as "the swing of the pendulum." When Mr. Chamberlain entered the House of Commons the Liberal Party were still in a state of disruption, and Disraeli, supported by a sufficient and docile majority, was autocrat. The Marquis of Hartington was nominal Leader of the Liberals, with Harcourt on his flank and Gladstone beginning to recover from the state of political torpor into which he was plunged by the rout of 1874. Towards the close of the first Session of the Disraelian Parliament the ex-Premier began to display ominous evidence of renewed interest in those political affairs which, writing to "My dear Granville" from Carlton House Terrace on January 30th, 1875, he formally, finally renounced.

It is strange to look back to that historic document with knowledge of all that happened since, a series of events in which Mr. Chamberlain took an increasingly predominant part. "At the age of sixty-five," he wrote, "and after forty-two years of a laborious public life, I think myself entitled to retire at the present opportunity. This retirement is dictated to me by my personal views as to the best method of spending the closing years of

my life." This chicken of sixty-five, as we all know, lived to introduce a revolutionary measure that shattered the Liberal Party, driving them into the wilderness of Opposition through which for twenty years, with brief and troubled interval, they forlornly struggled.

When Mr. Chamberlain entered the House, Gladstone was beginning to edge his way back to proximity to the seat of the Leader facing the brass-bound box. Early in the Session of 1877, the glare of war reddening the sky in the east of Europe, he began to resume his habit of regular attendance, opening the campaign which three years later drove Disraeli from power.

Mr. Chamberlain was at that time seated below the Gangway in friendly companionship with Sir Charles Dilke and the Radical section of the Opposition. Before the close of his first Session he made his maiden speech which, as in the course of his penultimate Session he reminded the House, dealt with the Education question. The speech whose moderation excited the marvel of honest Sir Walter Barttelot discussed a Prisons Bill introduced by Sir Richard Cross, then Home Secretary. Mr. Chamberlain did not enthusiastically support the Marquis of Hartington, to whom as a new Member of the Liberal Party his obedience was due. Others might regard Gladstone as an extinct volcano, might accept his protestation of retirement *au pied de la lettre* written to Lord Granville. Mr. Chamberlain took a more far-reaching view of the situation, attaching himself to the old Liberal captain. What he regarded as Lord Hartington's half-hearted Liberalism did not satisfy him. When, in the Session of 1879, the Irish Members, bent on obstruction, espoused the cause of the abolition of flogging in the Army, Lord Hartington declined to assist them in what he shrewdly suspected was merely a

cover for obstructive tactics. Mr. Chamberlain, throwing himself with characteristic energy into his new crusade, created a profound sensation by alluding to the noble Lord as "late the Leader of the Liberal Party," an often misquoted phrase which lost nothing of effect from the icily cold tones, the precise, deliberate manner, in which it was uttered.

That was, I think, the time the House of Commons first discovered the kind of man it had to deal with in the still young Member. Lord Hartington was not a habile speaker, nor did he go out of his way to make himself personally popular. But his high position, the weight of his character, the recognition of the self-sacrifice he made in assuming the thankless task abandoned by Gladstone of leading in Opposition a discredited and disorganised minority, combined to invest him with something approaching reverential respect. Here was a late recruit to the party coolly, with an air of absolute conviction, announcing his deposition. Evidently the Member for Birmingham was a man with whom recognised authority must take account.

It was, as the date cited shows, towards the end of the term of his first Parliament that Mr. Chamberlain assumed this bold attitude of independence. To begin with, he was content to make himself familiar with the atmosphere of the place, diligently performing the ordinary functions of a private Member. The first subject he took up, marking it specially his own, was that of the sale of drink. Having visited Gothenberg and made a personal study of its system of licensing, he expounded it to the House in a cogent, forceful speech. As the smouldering Eastern Question began to blaze he associated himself with Gladstone in increasing intimacy.

In 1877 the Liberal Federation, a powerful contributor to the Conservative rout of 1880, was organised chiefly by Mr. Chamberlain. Gladstone accepted an invitation to be present at the inauguration of the new body and was its President's guest at Highbury. Lord Hartington was still nominal Chief of the Liberal Party. Mr. Chamberlain gave pause to politicians by trumpeting the supremacy of Gladstone.

When after the General Election of 1880 his view of what was inevitable in the choice of the Premier had been somewhat reluctantly adopted by the Queen, it went without saying that he would be invited to take office under Gladstone. What followed was, however, a surprise to the public. Sir Charles Dilke was of older Parliamentary standing than the Member for Birmingham. His position on the Opposition benches in the 1874 Parliament was not less weighty. He had not the following out of doors that already sustained his friend. But he was recognised as an adroit Parliamentarian. If both were to be included in the new Ministry and only one to have Cabinet rank, it was taken for granted that precedence would be given to Sir Charles Dilke. In accordance with what was understood to be a friendly arrangement between the two, Mr. Chamberlain became President of the Board of Trade with a seat in the Cabinet, Sir Charles being content with the important but subsidiary position of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Chamberlain was now firmly seated in the saddle and began to ride with a fearlessness and command that captivated public attention if it perhaps somewhat alarmed a section of his colleagues. The distinction, exceedingly rare, where a man, not having served his apprenticeship in minor Ministerial office, is translated to

the headship of a Department with a seat in the Cabinet, was speedily and steadily justified by Mr. Chamberlain's official career. Hampered by obstruction, he succeeded in settling two great questions that had for more than a generation baffled Parliament. He passed a Bankruptcy Bill and he added a Patents Bill to the Statute Book. A prolonged, determined, attempt to grapple with the question of Merchant Shipping proved less successful. A powerful combination was formed resolved at any cost to defeat his efforts. Aided by the pressure of business in other departments it succeeded and the Bill was reluctantly dropped.

Apart from the work of his own Department, the President of the Board of Trade took a prominent share in debate. Gladstone's powers were yet unsapped, his glowing eyes undimmed. Next to him in a Ministry of exceptional capacity, Mr. Chamberlain was recognised as the chief buttress of the Treasury Bench, open to assaults now from the Conservatives, anon from the Irish Nationalists, occasionally by a combination of the two.

In the second year of the life of the new Government there happened a historic incident which illustrates the activity and preponderance of Mr. Chamberlain. In May, 1882, Parnell and some of his colleagues imprisoned under the Coercion Act were unexpectedly released. Mr. Forster, Chief Secretary, in a minority in the Cabinet on the question resigned office. Hints he let fall in a speech explaining his conduct suggested that there had been some secret bargain with the Irish Leader, in accordance with which, as the price of his release, he should undertake to work loyally with the Government in suppressing disorder in Ireland. Bit by bit the true story came out, culminating in one of the most dramatic

scenes ever staged in the House of Commons. Out of the sound and fury came the simple fact that (tragedy upon tragedy) Captain O'Shea, at the time the bosom friend of Parnell, had conceived a scheme of conciliation. He went with it to Mr. Chamberlain, whose sympathy with the Irish Nationalists was undisguised. As the result of several communications he, as Mr. Chamberlain informed the House, brought with him a letter written and signed by Parnell stating his belief that a settlement of the arrears question would have a powerful effect in restoring law and order in Ireland. If such a settlement were made, the Irish Leader and his friends would be able to take steps that might have effect in repressing the outrages at the time terrorising Ireland.

That was the famous Kilmainham Treaty. Read in the cool light of a new century, it is recognisable as a well-meant, honest attempt to re-establish law and order in sorely distraught Ireland. All the same it served as a useful weapon for party purposes, leading to a succession of angry scenes in the House of Commons.

Party passion was inflamed by the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish. On a Saturday morning he arrived in Dublin, hopefully carrying with him the olive branch of peace. On the evening of the same day he was lying stark in the highway skirting the Viceregal Lodge, done to death by assassins in the pay of the Land League. It was no secret at the time, and the report has been confirmed by subsequent testimony, that Mr. Chamberlain with characteristic courage and confidence was ready to accept the post vacated by the resignation of Mr. Forster. He was not alone in the expectation that it would be offered to him. Of course it would not necessarily have followed that, had he instead of Lord Cavendish arrived

in Dublin on that fateful 6th of May, he would have strolled homeward in company with Mr. Burke, the particular object of the murderous plot. But whether he had died or lived at the post, either course of events would have changed the history of Ireland and the Empire.

As Gladstone's second Administration waxed old and weakened, Mr. Chamberlain's energy increased, his personal influence widened and deepened. Gladstone was still "the People's William." But it was evident that in the matter of popularity the young Minister was beginning to run his chief very close, an unpardonable sin in any walk in life. From his acceptance of office the President of the Board of Trade was accustomed to supplement his share of debate in the House of Commons by visiting various centres of population and delivering speeches on current political problems. From Birmingham, Swansea, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Denbigh, Ipswich, Glasgow, Bradford, and other hives of men and industry a clarion-toned voice was heard preaching the gospel of Radicalism. One never knows, but recognising that after all Cabinet Ministers are almost human, there may be some foundation for the current report that Gladstone was not alone among Ministers who looked with coolness upon these excursions or noted without yielding to the contagion of enthusiasm the growing popularity of the still young Minister. Mr. Morley in his "Life of Gladstone" quotes a letter from the Premier in which he expresses the hope, in the circumstances equal to an injunction, that at a critical stage of a measure then before the House, the President of the Board of Trade would refrain from dealing with it in addressing a public meeting. *Punch*, which often succeeds in hitting off a political situation

in a cartoon, about this time presented one that had instant and immense success. "The Daring Duckling" was its title. Mr. Chamberlain was depicted as a young bird fearlessly dashing into a pond, whilst the Premier, Lord Hartington, and other of his elders anxiously, reprovingly, watched him from the brink.

At the opening of the Session of 1885 it was clear that the course of the Government was nearly run. At the very outset it had been almost hamstrung by the Bradlaugh business. Affairs in Egypt created dissension within the Ministerial ranks, whilst the Irish Question, like the poor, was always with us. Approaching collapse had the effect of raising Mr. Chamberlain's spirits, inciting him to fresh activity. He set forth carrying the fiery cross that came to be known as the Unauthorised Programme.

On June 8th, 1885, the end came. The Budget was still in Committee of Ways and Means. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach moved a resolution declaring that the proposed increase in the duties levied on beer and spirits was, in the absence of a corresponding addition to the wine duty, inequitable. The debate, big with the fate of Ministers, was curiously dull. There were frequent periods when it seemed quite easy to bring the proceedings to a close by a count out. It was ten minutes to one in the morning when Gladstone rose, an event that changed the scene into one of bustling excitement. He spoke for forty minutes. At a few minutes to two o'clock in the morning the result was declared amid a scene of wild excitement in which Lord Randolph Churchill played a boyish part. In a House of 516 Members Her Majesty's Ministers had been defeated by a majority of 12.

No one knew it at the time. But that was the end

of the active existence of the Liberal Party for a period of twenty-one years. In December, it is true, Gladstone was reinstated in power by even an increased majority and in 1892 he came in for the last time with a majority of 40. But the big majority was battered against the jagged teeth of the Home Rule Bill and the smaller one did not suffice to reinstate the party.

"The next General Election," said Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Hackney on July 24th, 1885, "will probably settle for the whole of the present generation the course of our future political history." The forecast was verified, but not in the fashion in which it shaped itself in the speaker's mind as he uttered it.

Relieved from the trammels of office, freed from personal relations with the Cabinet that had become unbearable, Mr. Chamberlain joyously went forward to prepare for the fray at the polls. Lord Salisbury, though in a hopeless minority had, upon conditions, undertaken to form a Ministry when Gladstone gave up the seals of office. "The Stop-Gap Government," Mr. Chamberlain wittily called it, in a speech delivered at the Cobden Club dinner within a week of the fall of the Liberal Ministry. Admittedly it lived solely at the mercy of the Opposition, who could on any convenient day terminate the farce. For five weeks Lord Salisbury and his colleagues ruled but did not govern at Westminster. In November Parliament was dissolved. The seed Mr. Chamberlain had deftly sown bloomed in abundant harvest. Gladstone's followers in the new Parliament numbered 334, whilst of Conservatives there were 250, of Parnellites 86. Thus the Liberals were within two of equal numbers with the combined forces of the Conservatives and Irish Nationalists.

This glorious victory proved to be the destruction of

Gladstone and the party he had for nearly twenty years led in triumph. Had twenty-five been subtracted from the number of his supporters and added to the Opposition muster, he might have been saved. As it was he, first tentatively, with increasing speed and directness hurried to his doom.

At the meeting of the new Parliament in January, 1886, all was well. Lord Salisbury, in obedience to what he regarded as constitutional precedent, met Parliament with the keys of office still in his hand. He preferred to take his dismissal from the House of Commons rather than resign. Dismissal was bestowed without loss of time. The Government were defeated by a majority of seventy-nine on an amendment to the Address moved by Mr. Jesse Collings in favour of a form of assistance to the agricultural labourer that came to be known as the allotment of three acres and a cow. Note was taken of the ominous fact that in this critical division the Parnellites, whose instinct and habit was to "go agin the Government," voted with Gladstone. Had they marched their eighty-six men into the other Lobby, Lord Salisbury would have been retained in office.

The demonstration had the planned effect. It was understood when Gladstone, commanded by the Queen, undertook to form a Ministry in succession to Lord Salisbury that he had definitely decided on introducing a Home Rule Bill as the first measure of his Government. Lord Hartington and Sir Henry James, members of his second Administration, finding their fears under this head confirmed, declined an invitation to join the new Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain, having satisfied himself that Gladstone's scheme did not materially differ from the extension of Local Government to Ireland he himself through his term of office had, in

conjunction with Sir Charles Dilke, persistently advocated, accepted office as President of the Local Government Board. Before the new Cabinet had been long engaged in shaping the Home Rule Bill, Mr. Chamberlain discovered that it would create a state of affairs widely differing from his own ideal. A week before the date fixed for the introduction of the Bill, the House and the country were shaken by the momentous news that Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. George Trevelyan, Secretary for Scotland, had resigned.

Of three chapters in a stirring personal history here opens the second. By chance I lived from first to last in the inner circle of the working of the Home Rule disruption, was personally acquainted with the captains on either side, and watched the varied eddying currents that carried them hither and thither. With such opportunities of forming a judgment, I have reached the deliberate opinion that if Mr. Chamberlain had stood by Gladstone at this crisis with the enthusiasm and fidelity that were displayed by Mr. John Morley, for example, the Home Rule Bill would have been carried. It is true he was not alone among the Thanes who fled from the side of the chieftain on the eve of his greatest discomfiture. The sterling honesty of Lord Hartington gave his defection the weight of a grievous blow. Mr. Bright's rupture with his ancient, long-loved colleague was perhaps even more weakening. It was Mr. Chamberlain who rode on the whirlwind and directed the storm that shattered Gladstone's barque. He rallied the Radical section of Members to the side of Lord Hartington, a quarter with which they were unfamiliar and on other grounds unsympathetic.

It was with profound regret that Mr. Chamberlain thus severed his connection with a statesman whom he

had long revered, a captain he had been proud to follow. Reluctance was completed by the certain consequence of splitting in twain the political party with which he had been associated from boyhood. So strong were these sentiments that on two separate occasions he, whilst standing steadfast to his views on the question of Local Government in Ireland, essayed to close the breach.

On the eve of the second reading of Gladstone's First Home Rule Bill the purpose was almost achieved. A mystifying, amazing falling away of Gladstone from a position definitely assumed broke the chain designed to draw close the severed sections of Dissentient Liberals. Lord Hartington and his friends would not have Home Rule on any terms. Mr. Chamberlain and his Radical followers, who numbered more than half a hundred, were willing to confer extended Local Government upon Ireland if control by the Imperial Parliament were fitly and fully reserved. This was the state of things existing on Monday, May 10th, 1886, the day fixed for the second reading of Gladstone's Bill. Ninety-three Liberals had in the Division Lobby declared against the measure as it stood. Of these fifty-five were under Mr. Chamberlain's personal leadership. Mr. Labouchere, then on friendly terms with the Member for Birmingham, volunteered to act as an intermediary between the Chamberlainites and the Prime Minister.

After an interview with the latter he left under the impression that Gladstone was prepared to drop the Bill after its principle had been affirmed on the second reading, bringing it up again in the following year with amendments permitting Irish Members to vote on all imperial matters, including imperial finance. The Dissentient Liberals assembled for the second reading expecting to hear this compromise publicly confirmed.

To their amazement and indignation Gladstone concluded his speech without alluding to the matter. This snapped the friendly chain. At a meeting held in one of the Committee-rooms of the House of Commons the Chamberlainites decided to vote against the Government, who were forthwith defeated by a majority of 30.

The second attempt at reconciliation was made at what was known as the Round Table Conference. Here Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. (by this time Sir George) Trevelyan met Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley with intent to talk matters over and see if there were not somewhere a basis of reconciliation. Nothing came of the well-meant effort and when the Round Table was broken up there was carried off with the fragments the last hope of patching together the Liberal Party.

A General Election confirming the verdict on the Home Rule Bill passed by the House of Commons, Gladstone retired and Lord Salisbury reigned in his stead. Declining overtures made to Lord Hartington to share the prizes of office, the Liberal Unionists retained their place in the Opposition camp, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Hartington, Sir Henry James, and one or two other ex-Liberal Ministers claiming seats on the Front Bench. This situation added piquancy to, occasionally threatened, the peace of Parliamentary procedure. It was a bitter pill for Gladstone and colleagues remaining faithful to his lead to have Mr. Chamberlain from time to time rising from their very midst and tearing their arguments to shreds. When the Election of 1892 made fresh disposition of parties the Liberal Unionists, still faithful to old traditions, accompanied the Liberal Party in their passage across the floor of the House. It was while seated at the

corner of the third bench behind the new Ministers that Mr. Chamberlain was a passive party to one of those incidents that assuage the anger of parties, adding a touch of courtly grace to the Parliamentary Tournament. Mr. Austen Chamberlain made his Parliamentary *début* in a speech on the second reading of the fresh Home Rule Bill Gladstone made haste to introduce in the new Parliament. In winding up the debate, the Premier made opportunity to pay a deserved tribute to this effort. "It was," he said, turning round to face his former colleague, "dear and refreshing to a father's heart." Whilst Mr. Chamberlain bowed acknowledgment the House rang with a hearty cheer in which for the moment all sections of party were united.

On the formation of Lord Salisbury's third Administration in 1895 the Chiefs of the Liberal Unionists sealed their compact with the Conservative Party by taking office. If the public had been surprised when, ten years earlier, Mr. Chamberlain obtained Cabinet Office, in preference to Sir Charles Dilke, astonishment was trebled when it was made known that in the Unionist Government he had elected to care for the Colonies. In accordance with Smoking-room gossip, it was understood that he had turned a friendly eye upon the Treasury. To one of his business habits and administrative capacity, the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed peculiarly appropriate. Moreover the Colonial Office did not appear to present a field enticing to a statesman of genius and ambition. On the whole it had not hitherto been associated with personal triumph. There was in the public mind vague impression that it was a sort of second or third rate Foreign Office.

Mr. Chamberlain in accordance with hourly habit knew what he was about when, passing by the Treasury,

the Home Office, and the Board of Trade, he installed himself in the hitherto obscure Colonial Office. Throughout a long and brilliant career his place in history will be largely determined by his administration of Colonial affairs, what it accomplished and what it led to. Within twelve months of his Secretaryship, the Colonies were animated by a new feeling, the revivification of loyalty to the Mother Country. They were no longer governed in a spirit of parochialism but were recognised as component parts of the Empire, children who had grown to the age when they might be admitted as counsellors in the family conclave. The events preceding, accompanying and closing the Boer War are of too recent occurrence to need recapitulation, too bitterly controversial in character to invite it. Amid the wrangling there were none save among the meanest partisans who called in question the honesty and patriotism of Mr. Chamberlain's convictions or the vigour with which they found expression in action.

Returning to London in 1903 after a triumphal journey through South Africa engaged in the task of winding up the tangled threads of the War, Mr. Chamberlain startled the world by a fresh departure. Acting primarily in furtherance of the object dearest to his heart, he evolved a scheme of preferential tariffs designed to draw the Empire into closer union. In order to relieve from embarrassment his colleagues in the Cabinet, and with a view to more unrestrained action, he sacrificed place and power, devoting himself as a private citizen and Member of the House of Commons to the gigantic task undertaken on the approach of his seventieth year.

Out of office, as when in the Cabinet, the ex-Colonial Secretary, up to the day when he was stricken down,

retained in the country his personal predominance. As a debater in the House of Commons he stood supreme, playing with master hand on its passions, its prejudices and its convictions. He started equipped with the priceless advantage of a musical voice, "soft and low, an excellent thing in woman," rare with man. Never, even in angriest moments, have I heard him raise his voice to pitch approaching a shout. Rather, when he was excessively angered, he lowered it to something suggestive of a hissing sound. Every syllable of every word was carefully enunciated. "What I have said, I have said," he remarked on a historic occasion. Neither in the composition of his sentences nor in their enunciation was there risk of ambiguity or misapprehension. He rarely attempted flights of oratory, though there are passages in his speeches which testify to possession of the gift. It was just businesslike talk, pellucid, persuasive, arousing enthusiasm on his own side, lashing the unconverted with whips of scorpions. He was at his best when, suddenly called upon in stormy times, he plunged unpremeditated into debate. He was a dangerous man to interrupt. Like flash of lightning flamed forth his retort, withering the hapless interlocutor. Members of the House of Commons who had once tried a fall with him by breaking in upon his speech with more or less relevant interruption were thereafter notable for avoidance of the temptation.

The vastness of Mr. Chamberlain's achievements on the Imperial stage have obscured the magnitude of the work he accomplished in Birmingham. If he had never done anything outside its boundaries he would have made his name memorable. There is to-day in the centre of Birmingham a broad thoroughfare flanked by prosperous shops. When Mr. Chamberlain took his

seat in the Town Council this was a congeries of slums harmful from a sanitary point of view, hideous as affecting the appearance of the town. He conceived the plan of buying up the property, running a boulevard through it, and meeting the expenditure from enhanced rates. He carried his plans in small things and large as he usually did. The slums were cleared away, fine shops built, and readily let on short leases. The day is close at hand when these leases will fall in and the rents will be applied to the reduction of rates.

Probably if Mr. Chamberlain's walk in life had been limited to the boundaries of Birmingham, that always enterprising place would have had direct access to the sea. Having transformed the slums, settled the water, sewage and drainage questions, the still young Mayor of Birmingham, sighing for fresh worlds to conquer, conceived the idea of cutting a canal connecting Birmingham with the Bristol Channel. But Fate and Fortune beckoned him to stray beyond Birmingham, and the place remains to this day a Midland town unsuccoured by the sea.

Mr. Chamberlain will live in history in connection with two momentous events. The first, the split of the Liberal Party on the Home Rule Bill; the second the War in South Africa, incidentally marked by the closer drawing of the Colonies to the Mother Country. It is evidence of his commanding personality that whilst he might probably have averted war with the Transvaal, he certainly prevented the establishment of Home Rule in Ireland. These two events seem sufficient to fill the record of a life however strenuous. At an age when most men would be contemplating a period of well-earned rest, Mr. Chamberlain started forth upon what proved alike the most arduous and the least successful

of his journeys. His crusade under the banner of Fiscal Reform suggests a close picturesque parallel. Since Gladstone, burning with indignation at the Bulgarian Atrocities, went forth to Midlothian, there has been no such enterprise as that undertaken by Mr. Chamberlain in 1903. When, on November 24th, 1879, Gladstone left Liverpool bound for Edinburgh on a mission destined to topple over one of the strongest Ministries of modern times, he was in his seventieth year. Mr. Chamberlain, embarking on analogous enterprise, was three years younger. All the same, political prejudice apart, the world stood in admiring gaze at his confidently setting forth upon a task not less arduous than Gladstone's, involving issues even more momentous.

It is not surprising in view of such a career that Mr. Chamberlain should have made bitter enemies. Evidence of the existence of the feeling was rarely lacking when he addressed the House. On a famous night in June, whilst he was still a private Member buttressing Lord Salisbury's second Administration, it burst forth in the cry of "Judas!" leading to a riot on the floor of the House that was, and happily remains, unparalleled. That cry came from the Irish camp. But the strong personal feeling was equally bitter among his early associates, the Radicals. Mr. Chamberlain faced the music with undaunted smile. Ever master of himself though angry passions rose, he temporarily lost command of the House only in moments of tumultuous interruption. During debate on the Address at the opening of what is known as the Khaki Parliament there was an angry flash in the pan. Mr. John Ellis, later Under-Secretary for India, interposing with correction of a statement made by the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain tartly responded, "The

honourable gentleman has related some of the facts connected with the correspondence but has withheld a full account. I will tell the truth." "For the first time," added a voice from the irrepressible Irish quarter. As a rule Mr. Chamberlain rather welcomed interruptions, offering as they did opportunity for damaging retort. But this was too much. It evidently stung him as if it had been the lash of a whip across his pale face. Looking steadily in the direction whence the interruption came, he hissed out the single word "Cad."

Setting aside party prejudice displayed on one side or the other, all will be constrained to admit that Mr. Chamberlain's meteoric success was due to sheer ability backed by dauntless courage. He won his way unaided by advantageous circumstances of birth or patronage. We know in public life men who achieve renown as Parliamentary debaters or platform speakers. Others are gifted with supreme business capacity commanding administrative skill. Mr. Chamberlain presented the rare combination of both these classes. In this respect he is without a peer. Gladstone, Disraeli and Bright stand highest on the Parliamentary roll of the last half of the nineteenth century. It cannot truly be said of any one of them that he was a great departmental administrator. Disraeli never attempted Ministerial work save at the Treasury where, with the assistance of able permanent secretaries, it is confined to finance. Gladstone and John Bright were each in turn President of the Board of Trade. Neither made his mark in a Department. By reason of his political acumen, his debating power, Mr. Chamberlain would have made his way to a front place in public life if he had not possessed business training and aptitude. After all, it is these and their fruits that made him what he was.

CHAPTER III.

SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE.

WRITING to Disraeli from Harley Street on the 19th April, 1862, Stafford Northcote profoundly observes, "No man can see both sides of a question with equal clearness; at least, if he can, he would probably be unfit for action. What one wants is a friend who would look at the matter in a different light, and who would fairly take counsel with one as to the line to be followed." Here is struck, all unconsciously, the keynote of the character of the statesman who filled so prominent and peculiar a part in English political life during a quarter of a century. Stafford Northcote was pre-eminently a man blessed (or cursed) with the faculty of seeing both sides of a question with equal clearness, occasionally a bewildering gift for a man from whom action is expected. Lacking in self-confidence, he was always feeling forth for the "friend who would look at the matter in a different light," and would either help him to make up his mind, or would peremptorily lead him on some definite path.

From earliest days, almost to the last, Northcote was provided with this controlling force, which, oddly enough, came in succession from two conflicting poles. In his early manhood it was Gladstone; later, all through middle life, it was forthcoming from Disraeli. When Lord Beaconsfield died, Stafford Northcote had reached an age and a standing which seemed to make it

unfit for any of his colleagues and contemporaries to do him the accustomed kindness. Lord Salisbury would have served admirably had he come earlier to the task, but Northcote, though not approaching Lord Salisbury in mental vigour or intellectual strength, was an "older boy." The two had long served together, Northcote nominally in a position ahead of Lord Salisbury. The gentle baronet, always ready to take a lower place, or even to efface himself, might in time have laid hold of Salisbury's skirts and walked behind him as he had trotted after Gladstone or followed Disraeli. There was not time for this arrangement to be made before catastrophe came. Lord Salisbury, succeeding to the Premiership under peculiar circumstances, was hurried along till he stumbled into that fatal blunder the memory of which doubtless remained with him a poignant regret. Had Lord Beaconsfield lived there might have been no Lord Iddesleigh. Certainly Stafford Northcote, under whatever name or title, would not have been hustled about in the contrivance of convenient Ministerial arrangements, and one morning, opening his paper in the breakfast-room at Pynes, have learned through this medium that he was no longer a Minister of the Crown.

Whilst the removal from the scene of his later friend and chief grievously altered the close of Stafford Northcote's life, his early connection with Gladstone influenced, not to say overshadowed, his whole career. It is curious to speculate upon what he might have been had he not started in public life as Private Secretary to Gladstone. He would probably have attached himself to someone else, as he did in later life to Disraeli. His gentle, faithful, in some aspect feminine, character made it necessary that he should have something to cling to,

some rock to lean against. In the enthusiasm of his young manhood he found the full realisation of his desire when he came to be Private Secretary to "the rising hope of the Conservative Party." That he had already admired Gladstone at a distance is evident from his letters. In the early summer of 1842 the two came together, Gladstone in the splendour of his young manhood; Northcote (twenty-four) nine years younger than his new master.

At this time Northcote was looking round, wondering what he should do. He had passed a pleasant time at Eton, and run a creditable career at college, winning election to a Balliol scholarship. He had been much troubled about religion, and at one time thought he had found salvation with the Irvingites. Then he went to the Middle Temple, read with a special pleader, even took rooms in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But already his thoughts were turned towards politics, of which he took the gloomy view that often oppresses ingenious youth. "Everything is in so dreadfully a disorganised state," he writes in 1841, "Church and State alike shaken, and men so generally inclined to look to human means of setting all to rights that the prospect is discouraging enough; or rather would be so did it not seem that the present condition of affairs was only a prelude to some great working of the Lord."

The spirit of devout, unaffected piety that breathes over these sentences animated Stafford Northcote throughout his life. Religion was reality to him, and his loyalty to the Church of England, as its authorised expositor, held supreme control over his political action. He could forgive Gladstone everything but his dealing with the Church.

Young Northcote grasped enthusiastically at the

proffer of the secretaryship to Gladstone, who was already his hero. "From what I know of Gladstone's character," he writes to his father announcing the negotiation, "there is no single statesman of the present day to whom I would more gladly attach myself." To another correspondent he says: "With any other man than Gladstone I might have hesitated longer; but he is one whom I respect beyond measure. He stands almost alone as the representative of principles with which I cordially agree; and as a man of business and one who, humanly speaking, is sure to rise, he is pre-eminent."

Northcote "believed without vanity" that he should be equal to the duties likely to be imposed upon him, and the expectation was abundantly fulfilled. He proved an inestimable treasure to Gladstone, toiling terribly and never tiring.

There grew up between the two an esteem and affection that survived the storm and stress of political warfare. At a time during the bitterness of feeling engendered by Gladstone's attitude on Disraeli's foreign policy, the once powerful statesman seemed to have finally fallen. There gathered round the supposed carcass of the lion the customary troop of unworthy assailants. Gladstone rising in the House of Commons was like the Stuart King riding through the streets of what had once been a boisterously loyal town. "There was none to cry 'God bless him.'" Even his friends and old colleagues on the Front Bench stood apart from him. Stafford Northcote never joined in the contumely with which his interposition in debate was greeted. On the contrary, he was even increasingly respectful in tone and manner. In the two volumes of his "Memoirs, Letters, and Diaries," there is only one peevish remark

about his old master. This is very small indeed, its only excuse being that it was penned at a time when Sir Stafford was in the full heat of the fight on the Bradlaugh Question. Writing in his diary after a night's debate, he says, "Unfortunately the House had greatly emptied for dinner when Gladstone sat down. It is a favourite habit of his to speak into the dinner-hour, so that his opponent must speak either to empty benches or forego the advantage of replying on the instant."

This is not only not true, but, for reasons that will strike any one familiar with the course of debate in the House of Commons, it could not be true.

On the whole, when in these later days they sat in the House of Commons with the breadth of the table between them, one Leader of the House the other Leader of the Opposition, Northcote's gentler and more affectionate nature bore the change with the least sign of strain. Gladstone was wont occasionally to testify to the depth of his affection in a singular fashion by directing against his old pupil outbursts of withering anger. More especially in debates on financial questions he resented Northcote's criticisms.

> Keen are his pangs, but keener far to feel
> He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel.

In the Parliament of 1874, in fuller degree in that of 1880, there was no man on the Conservative benches whom, with or without occasion, Gladstone was prone to rate with the tremendous severity he turned upon Stafford Northcote. Others might contradict or argue with him and be met with argument or contradiction in return. If by chance Northcote ventured to step into the arena, Gladstone, when his turn came, often before it was due, flung himself upon his former secretary and

hewed him in pieces before the Commons. Writing to him in 1855, when some little cloud was on the horizon, Gladstone says: "Nothing which you say can offend me. But I do not agree with you, which is quite another matter." Twenty-five years later this fine distinction became no longer possible.

Looking back on the heated debates from 1876, there is no picture that rises more vividly to the mind than that of Stafford Northcote sitting on one Front Bench, spectacled, meek-visaged, with head bent before the storm, hands thrust up the sleeves of his coat, literally trying to make as little of himself as possible; on the other side of the table, partly leaning across it as if desirous of closing his extended hand on the collar of his old friend's coat and shaking him, stands Gladstone, his eyes flaming wrath, his voice uplifted in angry denunciation.

It is one of the little etiquettes of the House of Commons that the term honourable, or right honourable friend, should be reserved for Members sitting together on the same side of the House. The custom was at one time varied in the case of the Irish Members, who have always sat on the same side as the Liberals. Nothing more sharply marked the march of political events than to hear Sir William Harcourt after the formal adhesion of the Liberal Party to the policy of Home Rule, referring to Mr. Healy or Mr. Dillon as "my honourable friend." Gladstone, most punctilious of Parliamentarians, deviated from this custom only under very special circumstances. Between Gladstone and Stafford Northcote it was, almost up to the last, "my right honourable friend." Gradually, insensibly, there was imported into the phrase a ring of sarcasm that made it more biting than the ordinary and colder form

of address. Then the inevitable change, meaning much more than the simple alteration of phrase implied, befell, and the two old friends became each to the other, "the right honourable gentleman."

I am not quite sure who began the change, but think it was Gladstone.

Sir Stafford Northcote took his seat in the House of Commons on the 16th of March, 1855. He was returned Member for Dudley on the recommendation of Gladstone, and at the instance of Lord Ward, who owned most of the shops and houses in the town, and, in those days, the Parliamentary seat went with them. Lord Ward seems to have been a very practical person, going about to choose a Member for his borough much as he might have set forth to select a pair of trousers for his wardrobe.

"Lord Ward is a staunch Peelite," Northcote writes during the contest, "and very anxious that the borough should be represented by a pure animal of that breed. But if there was to be any admixture, he would rather it were Derbyism than Radicalism."

Dropping in to consult Gladstone and Sidney Herbert on the subject, Northcote was recommended to his lordship as a person coming as nearly as possible up to his requirements. He was accordingly nominated and of course returned. But the patron of the borough presently learned that he, as was not uncommon with the passer-by, had mistaken Northcote's affability of manner for docility of character. After he had been in Parliament two years there arose a Ministerial crisis. It was on the Chinese Question, in which Lord Ward voted with the Government. He expected his nominee would do the same, or at least would abstain from voting. In an interview he sought with him on the eve

of a division in the Commons he politely but plainly told him so.

This was a critical moment for young Northcote. He was just embarked on his career. He had a safe seat, and everything depended upon his being in the House. Lord Ward had built a golden bridge for him. He did not insist upon his stultifying himself by voting against his conscience, merely asked him to take a course, ordinary enough even in these days when a fiercer light beats on the House of Commons, and walk out of the House. Northcote promptly declined. "Had I done so," he said, "I should have accepted the position of a mere tool, which would not suit me."

So he voted against the Government and sacrificed his seat for Dudley, believing at the time that it meant subsidence into private life. "As to standing anywhere else, I think in the circumstances of our family and fortune I must give up the idea."

Parliament was dissolved in 1857, and Northcote, standing for North Devon, was beaten after a contest, the expense of which crippled him for a short time. He went to France to economise, occasionally visiting England. During one of these trips Disraeli, who had had opportunity of judging of his value whilst he sat in the House for Dudley, made overtures to him. Like the Greeks, Disraeli came bearing gifts, and Stafford Northcote, steeped in classic lore, was inclined to distrust him. The Conservative Chief was so anxious to gain the new recruit that he offered not only to procure a seat for him, but when elected to make him Financial Secretary to the Treasury, the most important of offices in the Government classified as second rate.

Northcote's first idea was what would Gladstone think or say? "I would," he writes to Lady Northcote,

"much rather give up all thoughts of Parliament and office than do anything that would give him the impression that I was deserting him. Moreover, I should take care to let Disraeli know, if I do accept, that I shall never act against Gladstone in a personal question, should such arise,"—a pledge which, as we have seen, was faithfully kept. "As for Dizzy," as Northcote calls his proximate new Chief, "I only look upon my obligation to him as binding me to be personally civil to him and not as committing me to him in the event of any great break-up."

Even later in this year, after he had been in office pretty nearly a Session, he regards Disraeli from a lofty standpoint curious to look back upon with the knowledge of the years that followed. He was a guest at Knowsley in the autumn of this year (1859), and found himself in company with Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli. "Mrs. Disraeli," he writes to Lady Northcote, "is great fun, and we made capital friends in the train, though I could not help occasionally pitying her husband for the startling effect her natural speeches must have upon the ears of his great friends. . . . What do you say of asking them to Pynes? It would complete the astonishment of our neighbours."

Twenty years later that is not quite the way in which Sir Stafford would have discussed the suggestion of inviting Disraeli to be his guest in his ancestral home. But a great deal had happened in the meantime.

Even five years later Sir Stafford showed himself prone to regard Disraeli as a person who might be safely chaffed. Writing from a country house in Yorkshire in the autumn of 1864, he says, "The principal delight of our friends here is Dizzy's advice to the farmers to cross their sheep with the Cotswolds. Can't you imagine

him gravely giving it, as if he knew the difference between a Cotswold and a Southdown?" Here is the lordly English landowner, with an ancestry which, according to a pedigree preserved at Pynes, went back within half a century of the Conquest, disclosing his latent scorn for a man even yet regarded as an adventurer by some of the party who profited by his leadership.

In Mr. Froude's somewhat disappointing compilation of familiar episodes in the life of Disraeli there is a passage which admirably sums up a long period in his career some of the adulators of Lord Beaconsfield are apt to forget. "He had," Mr. Froude writes, "started on his own merits, for he had nothing else to recommend him, and he had challenged fate by the pretensions which he had put forward for himself. His birth was a reproach to be got over. He had no great constituency at his back, no popular cause to represent. He was without the academic reputation which so often smoothes the entrance to public life, and the Tory gentlemen among whom he had taken his place looked upon him with dubious eyes."

It was not until Disraeli had been triumphantly justified in his resolve not to be lured into accepting office when, in 1873, Mr. Gladstone was defeated on the Dublin University Bill, that there disappeared from the writing and conversation of members of his party all trace of the contemptuous distrust which for more than forty years hampered his progress.

It is interesting to watch Stafford Northcote pausing and pondering at this parting of the ways, lingering around the old love before he finally committed himself to companionship with the new. Once having given his hand to Disraeli, he was drawn closer and closer, never again to part. Thereafter, whenever a Government was

formed in which Disraeli had prominent place, he always cared for Northcote, advancing him step by step till, when he quitted the House of Commons, he installed him in his own place as Leader.

The authorised account of Northcote's Parliamentary career naturally grows more reticent as it approaches later times. There is no reference either in the Memoir, the Diary, or the Letter to what took place in the Session of 1876, in the closing weeks of which Disraeli disappeared from the scene. To those who chanced to be eye-witnesses of the course of events it was pretty to see how the Premier, contemplating his own departure, dexterously accustomed the House to the idea of Stafford Northcote as Leader. The course was not absolutely clear. There was in the person of Gathorne Hardy at least one other in the running. But Disraeli, a consummate judge of men, preferred to promote Hardy to a peerage, reserving the post of Leader for Stafford Northcote. Gradually, by almost imperceptible steps, he drew Northcote to the front, leaving him to answer questions addressed to the Leader of the House, occasionally transferring to him the duty of winding up a debate. It was said at the time that Stafford Northcote was "feeling his feet," and no fond mother watched her first-born with greater assiduity than Disraeli looked on Northcote, nor was any more delighted at his growing ease and strength.

Stafford Northcote was too amiable for the post he was thus called upon to fill. When "obstruction" was at its height, he, after a prolonged struggle in the House of Commons, made up his mind that he would put an end to the troublesome business. So he invited Parnell to call upon him at his private residence, shook him by the hand, spoke to him in a fatherly manner of the high

promise he displayed as a Parliamentary debater, begged him not to blast his prospects by irregular conduct, gave him breakfast, and finally dismissed him with something like a benediction. Sir Stafford went down to the House that same night cheerfully elate. He had, he felt sure, scotched the snake at the head. He was painfully astonished and doubly disappointed when, at the usual hour of the evening, Parnell rose, erect, pale, and persistent, and went on the weary road just as if some hours earlier fatherly words had not been spoken in his ear and a kind hand had grasped his own.

Stafford Northcote did not get over this poignant surprise for some time. But it was his nature to believe the best of everybody, and the weakness was constantly getting him into official trouble. A general favourite, he did not command that deference without which the title of leader is a misnomer. He was monotonously conciliatory. A man of less surely established character might sometimes have run the risk of falling under the charge of insincerity. There is a happy simile in Wordsworth's "Letters" that might apply to him when Chancellor of the Exchequer. A contemporary of the then young poet, one Bishop Watson, having been a Liberal, was terrified into Toryism. "Upon what principle, my lord," asks Wordsworth, "is your conduct to be explained? In some parts of England it is quaintly said, when a drunken man is seen reeling home, that he 'has business on both sides of the road.' Observing your lordship's tortuous path, the spectators will be far from insinuating that you have partaken of Mr. Burke's intoxicating bowl. They will content themselves, shaking their heads as you stagger along, with remarking that you have business on both sides of the road."

Too often, when listening to Stafford Northcote

adroitly balancing arguments, attempting to mollify Conservatives while he smoothed down the asperities of the Opposition, we might, if we were inclined to sneer at so good a man, have said of him that "he has business on both sides of the road."

The quips and quirks with which his predecessor in office was wont to keep the House amused were things of the past. Sir Stafford occasionally introduced into his harangues little stories or homely fables of the kind which illumine the pages of "Sandford and Merton." He never attempted repartee, and indulged in humour only at second-hand, in material of the mildest pattern. He made no pretence to oratory, but would enlarge in a plain intelligible manner upon his written memoranda. He was not given to long speaking, his chief concern being to get through the business of the night without giving occasion for angry passions to rise.

The personal intercourse between Disraeli and Northcote, extending over a period of more than twenty years, was, I believe, unruffled by a single misunderstanding. Stafford Northcote was a hard man to quarrel with, and Disraeli, according to the testimony of all who worked with him, was the most courteous of colleagues, the most considerate of Leaders. Northcote formed the habit of writing letters to him at critical periods. They were, perhaps, a little prosy, but full of wise counsel. What Disraeli thought as he read is not told. There is a charming account in the Diary of a Sunday spent at Hughenden in the summer of 1880. Parliament was busy with the Irish Land Bill, and Northcote went down to "give the Chief an account of the Parliamentary position." (At this epoch one notes that the personage who was written and spoken of at the outset as "Dizzy," who next lapsed into "Dis," becomes "the

Chief," and is always so called. Gladstone, it may be observed, was in private conversation or correspondence always alluded to by his colleagues on the front Bench as "Mr. G."). On this July Sunday Northcote "found the Chief very well and delighted to see me." "He has been quite alone with his peacocks, and revelling in the country, which he says he has never seen in May or June before." After dinner the talk chiefly turned on books, Northcote making the pleasant, and to some surprising, remark that "the Chief is always at his best in his library, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy a good ramble over literature."

One other peep we get of the Chief and his lieutenant in company of more dramatic interest. The precise date is not made very clear in the Memoir, but reference in other quarters shows that it was on the 24th of January, 1878. The meeting of the House of Commons had been prefaced by alarming news from the East, where the Russians and the Turks were still fighting. It was rumoured that the Russians were marching on Gallipoli bound for Constantinople. In a House densely crowded and wrought to a pitch of high excitement, Sir Stafford Northcote, with that air of offering a casual remark always assumed when he had a more than usually momentous announcement to make, gave notice that the Government would forthwith come to the House to ask for exceptional supplies. That was all he said, but as seeming to confirm the news which the evening papers were blazoning forth, it was regarded as certain that the country was actually on the brink of war. Various attempts were made to draw further information. Sir Stafford Northcote with grave face and solemn mien declined to be drawn.

After this the House, in accordance with its manner,

took up the next business, which was the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the best means of conducting public business. To Stafford Northcote as Leader fell the duty of making the proposal, which he did in his most matter-of-fact way, as if the echo of the Russian cannon approaching Constantinople had not just been heard in Westminster Hall. He resumed his seat, and it seemed that matters would go forward in the ordinary course till the hour of adjournment. Sir Stafford was sitting in his usual position on the bench, with arms folded and head downcast, when a letter was handed along the bench till it reached his hand. As he read it, his carefully cultured imperturbability gave way. He turned and spoke in hurried whisper to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who sat on one side of him, and to W. H. Smith on the other. The still crowded House looking on and marvelling what this might portend, beheld Sir Stafford rise and hurry out, followed by all the Cabinet Ministers present. It was clear that something momentous had happened to demand this instant summoning of a Cabinet Council. What it was leaked out drop by drop in the course of the next few days. The full story, with Lord Beaconsfield's figure introduced, is told for the first time in Northcote's Diary.

The Government had received information leading them to fear that a private arrangement about the Straits would be made between the Turks and the Russians to the exclusion and the detriment of other Powers. This was on the Wednesday, and at a Cabinet Council it was decided to ask for a Vote of Credit, and forthwith to order the Fleet to proceed to the Dardanelles. A message conveying this order was sent to Admiral Hornby, and Stafford Northcote, when he took his seat in the House on Thursday afternoon, knew

that the Fleet was already on its way. The message that came to him on the Treasury Bench, which led to his sudden departure and thrilled the House with a sense of fresh mystery and apprehension, was a telegram from Mr. Layard, British Representative at Constantinople, announcing that their first impression was entirely mistaken, that the terms of the bases of peace had been agreed to, the final one being that the question of the Straits should be reserved for settlement, not between Czar and Sultan, but by a Congress.

"After a hasty consultation with those of our colleagues who were in the House of Commons," Northcote writes in this interesting but undated entry, "I went up to Downing Street, taking Smith with me. We found Lord Beaconsfield in bed, but quite able to talk the matter over with us. The result was, that we agreed to stop Admiral Hornby before he entered the Dardanelles, where he had been led to expect that he might find orders. Smith despatched an Admiralty telegram at once. It was not in time to stop the Fleet, but it brought it back again to the entrance of the Strait."

What a picture is here for the hand of the historical painter—Northcote and W. H. Smith bursting into Lord Beaconsfield's bedroom with the news that the British Fleet had been sent on a fool's errand; Dizzy sitting up in bed, peradventure in a nightcap, discussing the direful news; W. H. Smith finally penning the telegram that was to bring back the Fleet just as the delighted crews, coming in sight of the Dardanelles, were sharpening their cutlasses and training their guns.

The last touch of absurdity was given to a really critical situation by the arrival on the next day of a correction of Layard's telegram. It was not between the Czar and the Congress that the question of the

Straits was to be settled, but between the Czar and the Sultan. "How we gnashed our teeth!" writes the gentle diarist. The episode was celebrated in the House of Commons in a verse which had great vogue, though probably Stafford Northcote never saw it:—

"When Government ordered the Fleet to the Straits,
They surely encountered the hardest of fates;
For the order, scarce given, at once was recalled,
And the Russians were not in the slightest appalled.
And every one says who has heard the debates,
'It's the Cabinet now, not the Fleet, that's in straits.'"

The post of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, which Stafford Northcote took on being elected for Stamford in 1859, is one that does not fill a large place in public estimation. But it is of prime importance, and has in several modern instances proved the pathway to the highest Ministerial post. The Financial Secretary is practically the business manager of the Government in the House of Commons. He edits the Orders of the Day, is a sort of fag for Ministers in charge of Bills, moreover, has at the Treasury, especially at the approach of Budget Day, an enormous amount of office work. There could be no better training for a young Minister, no post that sooner finds out whether a man be worth anything or nothing. Stafford Northcote, trained in the hard school of Gladstone's workshop, took naturally to the business, and more than justified Disraeli's prescience in selecting him for the post. He was brought early to the front in debate on financial affairs, venturing, not without some shaking in his shoes, to stand up against Gladstone.

This was in 1861, when the famous Budget involving the reduction of the paper duties was brought in by Gladstone. It was in this debate there passed the

delightful little correspondence between Lord Derby and Lord Palmerston. There was question whether the Budget, of which the secret had been well kept, would deal with the tea duty or the paper duty. Just before Gladstone rose, a messenger brought to the Treasury Bench a note from Lord Derby addressed to the Premier.

"My dear Pam," the note ran, "what is to be the great proposal to-night? Is it to be Tea and Turn-out?"

Lord Palmerston, reaching out for a sheet of note-paper, promptly wrote back: "My dear Derby, you are quite wrong. It is not Tea and Turn-out; it is to be Paper and Stationary."

Sir Stafford made a speech in opposing this Budget which secured for him a foremost position, ardent friends on the Front Bench and its neighbourhood comparing him with "Gladstone at his best without Gladstone's temper." After this his advance was steady, even rapid. In 1866, Lord Derby coming in, Northcote became President of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet. Following on the secession of Lord Cranborne, General Peel, and Lord Carnarvon from a Conservative Government that had carried a Reform Bill going far beyond that of Lord John Russell, which a year earlier they had combined to defeat, Northcote, converted by Disraeli's predominance, remained with the Government, and was made Secretary of State for India. Till the Dissolution in 1868 he held with credit this office through exceptionally troublesome times.

Then came the long interval of Liberal supremacy, lasting till 1874. Northcote was in constant attendance on the Front Opposition Bench, varied by a visit to Canada as Chairman of the Hudson Bay Company; a trip to Egypt for the opening of the Suez Canal, and

onward to Greece; and his appointment, on the invitation of Lord Granville, to join the Alabama Commission, which involved a visit to the United States, the junketing part of which was greatly enjoyed, and is described with surprising vivacity in his letters and journals. He seems to have been the life and soul of the party, gravely flirting with several of the ladies, and writing verse to one, being careful to send a copy to Lady Northcote. It is pleasant to think of the High Commissioner, still engaged in settling a matter of delicate international import, sitting down to turn verses to a young lady who has asked him to enrich her album. One sees him, with his lyre, strumming whilst he sang:—

> "I might have sung some maiden's wrongs,
> Some hopeless swain his fair adoring;
> I cannot sing the song of songs—
> I cannot sing of Mary Loring."

These records of his journeyings in foreign parts are among the pleasantest reading in his Memoir, displaying keen observation, love of nature, a gentle humour, and no inconsiderable literary ability.

When, in 1874, the tide turned again, and the Conservatives came in with a majority that for the first time in the generation placed them in power as well as in office, Stafford Northcote reached his predestined post as Chancellor of the Exchequer. From this date up to the Session of 1877, when, in succession to Disraeli, he assumed the Leadership of the House of Commons, runs a period that may be reckoned as the happiest and most prosperous of his public career. He was always better as lieutenant than captain. He started in his new position with one inestimable advantage—he was personally liked and respected in the House, much in the same way as was Lord Hartington, even a nearer

parallel being found in the case of W. H. Smith. When the House of Commons likes a man he may, if he has tact and ability, do as he pleases with it.

But the times were against Northcote. Had he come into office in 1874 matters would have turned out differently. The country was weary of the pegging away that, during the previous six years, had been going on under the dictatorship of Gladstone. It yearned for rest, and sent to the House of Commons a body of representatives that faithfully reflected its mood. Stafford Northcote, with his kindly ways, his little waggeries, his humdrum speech, his sound judgment, and his irreproachable character, would have been just the man for the Sessions of 1874-5. But these fell to the lot of Disraeli, and poor belated Stafford Northcote was appointed to ride upon the whirlwind and direct the storm that filled the House of Commons in the Sessions of 1877-8-9. Abroad, Europe was in flames, all the nations watching the desperate fight between Russia and Turkey, England standing through weeks and months on the very verge of war. At home trade was bad, Budgets disappointing, the people discontented, Parliament already past its prime. In the House of Commons there were nightly wrangles with the Irish obstructionists, suspensions of Members, twenty-six hours' sittings, and chaos generally. Still, Northcote had the strong hand of Lord Beaconsfield behind him, a majority that to the last presented an unbroken front on critical divisions, and, more precious than all, a loyal and united comradeship on the Treasury Bench.

Much worse things befell him in the closing chapter of his life which opened with the Parliament of 1880. At the General Election the Conservative Party received a crushing blow, and the whirligig of time once more

brought Gladstone to the Treasury Bench with a majority greater than ever. Stafford Northcote took up the Leadership of the Opposition, and at the outset decidedly scored.

It is true, though now generally forgotten, that he stumbled under compulsion into the successfully tactical position he assumed in respect of the Bradlaugh incident. When, on the 3rd of May, 1880, the first working day in the new Parliament, Mr. Bradlaugh presented himself and claimed the right to make affirmation, Lord Frederick Cavendish, on behalf of the Government, moved the appointment of a Select Committee to consider the matter and report. Stafford Northcote, as Leader of the Opposition, seconded the motion, and it seemed at the time as if the incident had closed in orderly fashion. The Committee was appointed, met, and decided that Mr. Bradlaugh did not belong to the class of persons exempted by law from taking the oath as a preliminary to taking a seat in the House of Commons. Thereupon Mr. Bradlaugh offered to take the oath. Another Committee was appointed which denied him this privilege. He insisted upon his right. Sir Henry Wolff came to the front, gallantly throwing his body across the passage by which Mr. Bradlaugh would have advanced to the table. Eighteen days after, having seconded the motion to refer the case to a Select Committee, Stafford Northcote turning round seconded a motion by Sir Henry Wolff declaring Mr. Bradlaugh's seat "vacant as if he were dead."

A terrible Nemesis lurked under this action, for out of it was born the Fourth Party that finally wrecked him, driving him first out of the House of Commons, finally hustling him out of the Ministry.

What Stafford Northcote thought and wrote during

the dark period that culminated in a memorable scene one June evening in the Session of 1885, when Sir Michael Hicks-Beach deserted him and joined the mutineers under Lord Randolph Churchill, his biographer found it necessary to omit from his record. Though this was imperative, it is none the less a pity, since it leaves blanks in the most interesting portions of the story.

Here and there in the emasculated record are slight hints of the frame of mind in which Sir Stafford approached his diary. On the 10th of June, 1885, Gladstone resigned, having been defeated on Sir Michael Hicks-Beach's amendment to the Budget. Lord Salisbury, after some hesitation, decided to take office, albeit in a minority. On the 13th of June Northcote writes in his diary: "—— this evening told me of the wish of the Carlton that I should go to the other House. With some of them it is a wish to get rid of me. With others it is anxiety for my health."

Two days later Lord Salisbury proposed that he should take the post of First Lord of the Treasury and lead the Commons. On this there is a pathetic entry in the diary, showing how nearly the wounded heart had come to breaking. "I have," he writes, "offered either to do this or go to the Upper House, taking the India Office. I have offered to do whatever he thinks best. I have not much heart in the matter. This has apparently been my last night in the House of Commons. I have sat in it rather more than thirty years, and it has become part of my life."

As it turned out, he visited the House once again, entering quietly from behind the Speaker's Chair at half-past four on the afternoon of the 19th June, 1885. His friends on the back benches caught sight of him and

raised a cheer. It was taken up below the Gangway, where at that time the Irish Members and the Fourth Party sat together. From the benches which the Liberals thronged, jubilant though defeated, applause burst forth, and for several moments the House rang with cheers. This was the parting farewell. Stafford Northcote passed out never to return. He forthwith took his seat in the House of Lords as Earl of Iddesleigh, holding Cabinet rank with the honourable but not physically or mentally exhausting post of First Lord of the Treasury.

Practically he was shelved, and would have been comparatively happy had his life now quietly ebbed out. When, however, the Conservative Government, allied with Lord Hartington's Party, were confirmed in power after the General Election of 1886, Lord Iddesleigh, always ready to serve, accepted the seals of the Foreign Office. Once more times were quieter, and if he had been left alone he had still another chance. But the malign influence of the Fourth Party pursued him. When, on the eve of Christmas, 1886, Lord Randolph Churchill threw up his office as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, a reconstruction of the Ministry became necessary. Stafford Northcote was, as usual, promptly to the fore, ready to sacrifice himself, if that were any use to the party. It would have been bad enough if his offer had been accepted in the usual form, and decent excuse made in the public ear for getting rid of the faithful servant of thirty years. As it happened, he, in common with the million readers of the penny Press, learned from an outside source that his resignation had been accepted, and that his career was closed. No murmur escaped his lips. The news was confirmed in the

afternoon by a telegram from Lord Salisbury, followed by a letter received on the next morning. To this Lord Iddesleigh replied that he cheerfully accepted the Premier's decision.

In the next week he went up to London to pack up his papers at the Foreign Office. Thence he walked across Downing Street to see Lord Salisbury, doubtless with intent to assure his noble friend that it was all of "no consequence." There, sitting in an anteroom waiting his call, he died—the only dramatic personal incident in a placid life.

Stafford Northcote was a good man rather than a great one. As Mr. Andrew Lang finely says in the introduction to his biography, there were no shining peaks nor unfathomed depths in his mind. He was especially equable. Equability is a great gift in the House of Commons, which, prone to be storm-tossed, likes to find a Leader who stands unmoved. Disraeli had this gift. Gladstone had it not. Stafford Northcote, thanks to a gentle nature and supreme sweetness of temper, possessed it in a large degree. It was sometimes, in appearance, carried to comical extreme; as, for example, when on an early day in the Session of 1880 he sprang on the House of Commons the amazing news of the Dissolution. The secret had been well kept. The Leader of the House appeared at the table, ostensibly to make an ordinary statement on the course of public business. This duty he had discharged, and seemed about to resume his seat when, as if it were an afterthought, he added, "Being on my legs, I may state——" Then came the stupendous news.

But equability is, after all, superficial. Disraeli was equable and something more. Northcote was equable, but there was something lacking, and when storms

broke, his equability turned out to be painfully like weakness. He was prudent, experienced, suavely wise, but not strong. An excellent pilot in moderately fair weather, but, as was shown when the Fourth Party grew into full development, not the pilot who could weather the storm. As he once half humorously, wholly pathetically said, he was "lacking in go." The House of Commons esteemed him personally—liked him, probably, beyond most others. But, though he was nominally Leader through three Sessions, it was really never led by him.

He was in no degree a Parliamentary orator. That, as Disraeli once in conversation with him shrewdly argued, is no disadvantage to a Leader of the House of Commons. Disraeli's idea, certainly carried out in his own case, was that the Leader of the House should be, not unable, but unwilling to speak. Stafford Northcote had a logical mind, and was lucid alike in the arrangement of his argument and in its setting forth. But he was not what is known in the House of Commons as an attractive speaker, much less an orator. His abounding good sense prevented him from essaying parts he was not qualified to fill. I do not remember his closing any of his more important Parliamentary speeches with attempt at peroration. He just talked to the House, perhaps not without suspicion of prosiness, and when he came to the end of what he had to say, or found his audience yawning, he stopped. He had a good voice, which in marked degree shared his characteristic of equability. His gestures whilst speaking were few and mechanical. His principal one was imitated from the worst in usage by his Chief. Sometimes, in comparatively involved passages of his speech, whilst thinking out his argument, Mr. Disraeli acquired a habit

of pinning his elbows to his sides, and waving out open hands, as if he were splashing some one with water. Northcote picked up this trick, and used to enforce his argument with its inadequate assistance.

The House of Commons, to tell the truth, did not particularly care for his ordered speech. It thoroughly gauged his character, and held him in higher esteem and in warmer affection than, in his time, it had bestowed upon much more brilliant men.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. JOHN MORLEY.

MR. MORLEY has not been much in evidence on the Treasury Bench since, at the opening of the new Parliament, he took his seat as Secretary of State for India. He has absolutely abstained from general debate, and does not always think it necessary to put in an appearance personally to reply to questions on the paper addressed to him. He suffers in appreciable degree from weakness of voice, and is careful not unduly to strain himself. This habit of reticence and retirement made more striking his dramatic intervention in a busy day of last Session (1907) when news from Calcutta recorded the growth of sedition in India. The Leader of the Opposition had privately consulted him as to the convenience and desirability of making a statement upon the condition of affairs in India. Mr. Morley readily assented, and came down prepared with a written-out document which in due time he read.

That was the ordered and orderly course of procedure. It was the preliminary phase of the episode that roused the House to a state of high excitement. Challenged from below the Gangway on the Ministerial side with demand for repeal of the Act which empowers the Viceroy practically to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in cases of emergency, Mr. Morley, carefully weighing his words, speaking with a sense of responsibility that

greatly impressed the House, declined to strip the Government of India of any weapon the law placed in its hands for the suppression of disorder or sedition. This decision was greeted with an outburst of cheering in which the Opposition heartily joined the main body of Ministerialists. The little band of doubtless honest, dubitably wise, men who watch with jealousy efforts of the Indian Government to nip sedition in the bud and make impossible repetition of the horrors of '57, were not to be silenced. In succession they rose and catechised the Minister.

The situation was grave and, to a man of Mr. Morley's instincts, particularly painful. As he said, his Parliamentary record shows that executive measures of the kind recently made imperative in India are distasteful to him. He sanctioned them only when assured beyond doubt that, for the safety of India and the maintenance of its growing prosperity, they were absolutely necessary. He brought no reproach against his interlocutors, whom he was careful to allude to as "my honourable friends." But in solemn tones, in manner that betrayed apprehension of the worst, he besought them to refrain from conveying to the watchful native population of India the idea that the House of Commons was divided on the question of maintaining the supremacy of the law.

For immediate effect, he might as well have addressed the pillars of Westminster Bridge. The "friends of India" were up again and again. They found the Minister, whilst still courteous, immovable. When at length the fusillade ceased on intimation from the Chair that notice of supplementary questions should be given, a renewed demonstration from both sides applauded and sustained a Minister who, confronted by a delicate,

nationally dangerous, position, faultlessly acquitted himself alike in manner and in matter.

Mr. Morley has lived long enough to disprove some widely accepted Parliamentary aphorisms. One is that the gateway of success is closed against a man in the House of Commons unless he takes his seat whilst yet young. Another points to high reputation acquired out of doors as a bar to Parliamentary renown. Whilst a third fixes upon literary men as the least likely to achieve high Parliamentary position. All these things are true, and Mr. Morley's variation of the rule affords evidence of high capacity, indomitable courage, and dogged perseverance.

He was in his forty-sixth year when he first walked up the floor of the House of Commons to take the oath. It is a splendid age, the very prime of life for an intellectual man. But it is a little late to begin the work of assimilation with the House of Commons. It will be found, without exception prominent enough to be called to mind, that all men who have made the highest mark in the Parliamentary record have entered the House in their young manhood. Pitt, Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, are names that suggest themselves in illustration of this law—four men whose characters are wholly dissimilar, who reached the highest position by lines of personal conduct and public policy widely diverse, but who possessed in common the inestimable advantage of entering the House at a stage of comparative youth.

For some Sessions it seemed as if this disadvantage would prove insurmountable to Mr. Morley. Upon a man of his temperament and nature it pressed with exceptional weight. Superadded was his literary training and the high reputation won outside the precincts of

Westminster. For a time it seemed as if the world were destined to witness re-enactment of the tragedy of the Parliamentary failure of John Stuart Mill.

The House was crowded on every bench to hear the maiden speech of the biographer of Burke and Cobden, the philosopher who had written "On Compromise," the man who had thrown fresh light on the working of the minds of Voltaire and Rousseau. It was, moreover, a friendly audience, generously eager to welcome a new acquisition to its intellectual forces. That the speech was full of weighty matter, carefully prepared, goes without saying. This was, perhaps, the secret of the failure. It was an essay on the question of the hour, and would have been well enough if the course usually found convenient in communicating essays to an audience had been permissible, and the new Member had been allowed to read his MS. That was out of order, and Mr. Morley, with parched tongue and blanched face, painfully stumbled through an imperfect recital.

Within five years of his first appearance on the Parliamentary stage he ranked as one of the ablest debaters in the House of Commons. The position was acquired by slow and laborious process. He always had it in him, but for several Sessions he could not get it out. To some men the delivery of a speech in the House of Commons or elsewhere is an incident in an idle hour, a mere recreation—though that view of it may not be taken by the audience. To Mr. Morley it is a serious business, carrying with it an amount of responsibility not to be lightly or unnecessarily undertaken. He is conscientiously concerned not only for the matter of the speech but for the selection and proper sequence of every word that composes it. To his almost ascetic

literary taste, the looser style of expression which passes with a public audience is shocking.

That was a mistaken view, appreciation of which came to Mr. Morley by accident. After he had been some Sessions in the House, occasionally taking part in debate, listened to but, as a speaker, not loved, he happened to find himself on a platform at Leeds faced by a crowded audience. It was at the time when Liberals were beginning to recover from the knockdown blow of the General Election of 1886. A bye-election had been won here and there, and there was already talk of the flowing tide. The Conference Hall at Leeds was full of enthusiasm, and its electricity touched Mr. Morley. He had come prepared with the customary carefully thought-out lecture, with heads and catch-notes written out. Something said early in the speech drew from the highly-strung audience a rousing cheer. Mr. Morley, following up the line thus opened, spoke on without reference to his notes, delighting the audience and probably astonishing himself with the ease and success of the daring experiment. It was as if a man floating on the water, by accident deprived of his life-belt, discovered that he could swim very well without it.

This memorable speech, epoch-making in the Liberal campaign, was not only a success in the Conference Hall but created a profound sensation through the wider circle touched by the connecting link of the newspaper report. It was the turning point in Mr. Morley's career as a public speaker. He has not since fallen back, but rather, has steadily advanced. Even yet he speaks with more effect on a public platform than from the table of the House of Commons. That is doubtless because he is more at ease in one situation

than in the other. The greatest living English actress makes no secret of the fact that though she has lived and worked on the stage from childhood, she is still subject to accessions of stage fright. Mr. Morley has not yet got over his tendency to House-of-Commons fright. Probably he never will, a mental condition that carries no reproach, since up to the last it beset Mr. Bright. Other eminent men know it not. No one familiar with the House of Commons would have found it possible to associate Sir W. Harcourt, for example, with this occult influence.

It is not generally known that Mr. Morley, casting about for a career after he left Oxford, turned his thoughts toward the Bar. As a matter of fact, he was called at Lincoln's Inn the very year he left Lincoln College. Mr. Balfour, mellowing at his post as Chief Secretary, was wont to amuse the House by the punctiliousness with which he gave every Irish member his due. He was the first to draw attention to the fact that Mr. Tim Healy had been "called" by alluding to him as "the honourable and learned gentleman." In the session during which Mr. Sexton was Lord Mayor of Dublin he adroitly saved an appreciable portion of public time by the mollifying influence of his frequent reference to him as "the right honourable gentleman." Even Mr. Balfour, doubtless ignorant of this episode in a once quiet life, never addressed Mr. Morley as the honourable and learned gentleman.

Mr. Morley's first regular work on the Press was his contributions to the *Literary Gazette*, a journal he in due course came to edit. About the same time he was a contributor to the *Saturday Review*. He came into fuller fame as editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, a newly-established periodical he at once placed in the front rank.

When he became editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* it seemed as if he had finally resolved to cast in his lot with journalists. Nevertheless, while he slaved at the editor's desk, at once the most arduous and the most thankless position attainable by human ambition, he wrote works chiefly biographical, studies that quickly took their place as classics of English literature.

Born and trained a literary man, he had ever a turn towards politics. His connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette* brought him into the vortex, and he gradually drifted into the resolution to quit the ambush of the editor's room and serve in the ranks on the open field of battle. When he first took his seat in the Commons as member for Newcastle, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke sat together below the gangway. With them he foregathered, the three forming an advanced guard of Radical force whose power slowly but surely grew. His two friends were naturally absorbed in the Liberal Ministry when it was formed in 1880. Mr. Morley's time had not then come. When it did arrive, it incidentally created a personal estrangement with Mr. Chamberlain, a rift within the lute that, quickly widening, made the music of their friendship mute. It is possible that had Mr. Gladstone made Mr. Chamberlain Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1886 instead of passing him over to give precedence to Mr. Morley, some important chapters in the political history of the last six years would have been otherwise cast.

In addition to rare intellectual gifts, chastened and strengthened by high culture, Mr. Morley has the endowment, priceless to an English statesman, of a reputation for absolute disinterestedness. People may differ from him on matters of opinion; political friends or foes are all one in their belief in his absolute honesty

of purpose. Not even for the advantage of his party—and for party purposes even good men will dare to do shady things—will Mr. Morley stray by the breadth of a peppercorn from what he holds to be the right course. This implacable virtue shone brightly through the shifting scenes of the General Election of 1892. He has from the first taken a clearly defined position on the question of the length of the labour day. Having studied the subject from every point of view, he came to the conclusion that compulsory limitation of the hours of labour by the action of the Legislature would be inimical to the interests of the working man.

Having reached that conclusion, it was natural for him to rest upon it, undisturbed by winds that might blow from without. What proved to be a strong contingent of his constituents at Newcastle declared in favour of the eight hours day, and insisted upon their Parliamentary representative turning round to join them. Mr. Morley declined to obey the mandate, even if it cost him his seat, and it very nearly did.

Faced by the necessity of another contest on acceptance of office in the new Ministry (Gladstone's last), he was made painfully aware of the lion again lurking in the path, more enraged than ever, encouraged by the nearness of its late approach to gobbling up its scornful adversary. There was much at stake, and the temptation to temporise would, with some men, have been irresistible. Putting aside consideration of his own ostracism, Mr. Morley might have found on high patriotic grounds reason for tampering with his personal conviction. If he were defeated at Newcastle, the blow to Gladstone's newly-formed Ministry would be so staggering that it might not recover, might go down carrying with it unaccomplished purposes Mr. Morley

believed to be conceived in the truest interests of the country.

That sort of thing is done upon occasion by statesmen above reproach. It did not seem even to occur to Mr. Morley's mind. He nailed his colours with firmer hand to the mast, went down to Newcastle and fought out the fight with a strenuous vivacity that revealed new depths in his character. That he should have won his seat by a vastly increased majority was a matter naturally unpleasing in one political camp. But all Englishmen rejoiced in the issue of a desperate struggle in which honesty triumphed over expediency.

People not admitted to the intimacy of Mr. Morley's friendship regard him as an austere man, whose talent, if he bestow it on you, it were well to wrap in a napkin in readiness for the day of reckoning. His manner is certainly not flamboyant. But its occasional aloofness, of which complaint is made, is simply the reticence of a highly born sensitive nature, quickly shocked by anything coarse or mean. This sometimes obscures but never hampers the impulse of the keenest and most generous human sympathies. Perhaps the best appreciation of John Morley, framed in fewest words, was unwittingly given by himself, when he described Dean Church as "The fine flower of Oxford culture, uniting the best gifts that come of culture—sound and just sense, and unstained purity of spirit."

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CHAPTER V.

LORD HUGH CECIL AND HIS ELDEST BROTHER.

In the House of Commons, as in other competitive Assemblies, there are various stages of arrival at the point of eminence. A man may be said to be coming when he has delivered a maiden speech that commands attention. Others, having made their mark and achieved a position, are coming in the sense that they may be expected some day, sooner or later, to take their place in the front rank of statesmen and administrators. Lord Hugh Cecil belongs to the latter category. He has served more than his seven years' apprenticeship, and is established among masters of the art of Parliamentary debate. Whether he possesses the other and quite distinct qualifications for a successful office-holder is doubtful. He is much too good for Downing Street's daily food. Moreover, in the case of Lord Cranborne the result of experiment of extending bestowal of office among the sons of Lord Salisbury is not encouraging to further effort. The paternal tendency to utterance of blazing indiscretions is apparently ineradicable.

Mr. Arthur Balfour, who naturally knows the subject thoroughly, has drawn a portrait sketch of his cousin Hugh that leaves nothing to be desired in the matters of point, accuracy, or picturesqueness. The occasion of its forthcoming was characteristic. It happened on the ultimate stage of the Education Bill of 1902 in the

House of Commons. The Lords' amendments were under discussion, and Mr. Balfour disappointed his cousin by stopping short of full approval of their lordships' work. Lord Hugh rose to make what he called "a final protest" against destruction of the right of the incumbent of a parish to teach in a school except by consent of the lay managers. He was in bitterest mood, girding frequently at the Premier for his wanton disregard of the Papal privileges of the Protestant parish priest. Mr. Balfour, who generally treats the generous eccentricities of his cousin with extreme tenderness, was moved to equal bitterness in his reply. The situation was not soothed by Lord Hugh's frequent interruption.

Lord Hugh concluded his speech by frankly avowing intention, on behalf of himself and his friends, to do everything possible to defeat the purpose of the Bill in respect of its restraint of the autocratic power of the clergy.

"My noble friend," said Mr. Balfour, turning occasionally to regard his cousin, whose extreme nervous excitement gave him the appearance of being tied up in a knot on the corner seat below the Gangway, "declares that no considerations of peace will induce him and his friends to desist from agitation against this clause when the Bill is passed. From what I know of my noble friend, I am sure he is not making a boast which he will not absolutely fulfil. I do not believe that any consideration of peace will restrain him, but I must frankly say that I think him ill-advised. No man has a greater authority than my noble friend amongst a most devoted and able section of the clergy of this country. They look up to him, they follow him, especially in matters in which politics and religion are both concerned. They regard him, and I think they rightly regard him, as the

ablest exponent of their views. I think my noble friend ought to remember that, if he has thus gained and earned great power, he has with it taken upon himself a great responsibility. And as he has with great frankness told the House and the country what he thinks of the Government, I am bound honestly to tell him that I think he cannot do a worse service—I will not say to the Government and to the party to which he belongs, because, rightly, he looks upon these considerations as inferior and subservient to those which have a higher origin. I think he is doing much more than that. He is doing a great disservice to the cause of that religious education of which he is so enthusiastic an advocate. I believe he is driving deeper the wedge which, unhappily, is separating certain classes of ecclesiastical opinion from the great body of religious lay opinion in this country, and in which I, at all events, see the greatest danger looming in the future to the cause of religion as a whole, and more especially to the cause, the welfare, and the prosperity of the Church of England."

Here, drawn by a master hand, we see presented the intellectual, fanatical Churchman. Lord Hugh preserves in a utilitarian twentieth century the character of the imperious cleric of Inquisition days. Had he been born in the time of Queen Mary he would probably have been burned at the stake as a rank Protestant. Had his appearance been deferred till the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he would undoubtedly have been executed for Papistical tendencies. To do him justice, had he in either epoch possessed the power, he would, in the interests of the Church he happened to belong to, have dealt out similar discipline to others. In whatever state it might have pleased Providence to call him at or about this highly-controversial epoch, he would have been in

the minority, bent, at whatever cost, on saving the souls of the majority, if necessary by fire.

More closely than any of the Salisbury sons, Lord Hugh resembles the Marquis. With the space of fifty years between their opening careers, they were equally loyal to Mother Church. Consider the following passage: "I shall resist any public system of education which is not based on the truths of revelation as a distinct and indispensable element. The events which have passed in Ireland are a sufficient warning of the futility of all educational plans in which religious instruction is not enforced, and demonstrate that such compromises do not even satisfy those in deference to whose hostility they were adopted." This is not a quotation from one of Lord Hugh Cecil's speeches on the Education Bill passed in the Autumn Session of 1902. It will be found in an address by Lord Robert Cecil, at the time having no expectations of succeeding to the marquisate, to the electors of Stamford, whose favour he was wooing in the year 1853.

Lord Hugh has inherited the gift of exquisite phrasing that adorns his father's public speeches. Also, like his father, he is able on the spur of the moment to deliver an extemporaneous speech. When he prepares one in advance his notes are scanty, and do not confine him to narrow pathways of argument or illustration. In highly-polished phrases, every word the right one set in its proper place, he pours contumely on enemies of the Church, scorn on weak-kneed members of it. His oratorical action is peculiar and ungainly. In the opening passages of a speech he wrings his hands with painful force over someone's shortcomings. This is followed by the rapid movement of his outstretched right hand held palm upwards, with fingers rigidly

extended. It does not mean anything save indication of a highly-wrought nature. But the action is painfully suggestive of slicing off somebody's head. His third gesture, arrived at in due course, is to assume that his unoffending left hand is the head of the adversary and this he proceeds to punch with amazing force and rapidity.

Though wholly impracticable, representative of an extreme autocratic clerical party, Lord Hugh when driven out of Parliament on account of what Tariff Reformers regarded as heresy, was recognised as one of the most attractive speakers in the Commons. After Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Tim Healy, there is none who could so rapidly fill the benches in the last Unionist Parliament as he, nor any whose speeches were listened to with keener interest and intellectual delight. One reason for this command over the most fastidious audience in the world was absolute conviction of his sincerity. Members listening knew that however *outrés* be his declarations he himself believed every word of them, and would cheerfully go to the stake re-affirming them.

He is obviously not the sort of man out of whom Ministers are made. Assuming him admitted to the companionship of the Treasury Bench, he would be certain within six months to quarrel with his chief or some of his colleagues on matters of conscience. The only doubt thrown on this induction arises in connection with a little manœuvre, adoption of which by Lord Hugh amazed and shocked the House. On a Wednesday afternoon, Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister Bill was before the House on the second reading. It was carried by a substantial majority that seemed to assure success to the proposal to refer it to a Select

Committee. Time was everything in the matter. If the Bill were forthwith referred to a Select Committee it would, under the rules affecting Private Bills after Whitsuntide, hold an exceptionally favourable position. The division was called at a quarter-past five, leaving ample time to bring the tellers up to the table with the few minutes to spare necessary for moving the reference to the Select Committee. At half-past five on a Wednesday (the incident happening before the new time-table came into operation) debate would be peremptorily interrupted and the Bill's chances would be lost.

On Lord Hugh Cecil's ordinary guileless brain there flashed an idea which good Churchmen would be more disposed to associate with the Nonconformist conscience. If he and the minority hostile to the Bill walked through the Division Lobby at the ordinary pace, they would be back before half-past five, the Bill would be referred to a Select Committee, and all would be lost. He accordingly "loitered in the Lobby," to quote the term by which the manœuvre was indignantly denounced by the outwitted friends of the Bill. The loitering lasted just long enough to bring the tellers against the Bill up to the table after the hands of the clock pointed to half-past five. According to the Parliamentary rule of honour, this is playing a little low down, and the almost saintly character of the Member for Greenwich bestowed on the performance an added gravity.

This episode certainly seems to show that, upon proper occasion, Lord Hugh would be found not lacking in that adaptability to circumstance inseparable from administering a Department and representing it in the House of Commons at question time.

In the smoking-room the remark is attributed to

Mr. Arthur Balfour that "Life would be passable only for its cousins." This is doubtless apocryphal, as were Wellington's "Up Guards, and at 'em," "The Tenth never dance," and the like. But it must be admitted that a substratum of fact underlies the fanciful structure. Through the long debate on the Education Bill, Cousin Hugh was a sore thorn in the flesh of the Minister in charge of it. His ability, his pertinacity, and—a consideration not to be left out of account—his Cecilship, combined to make him a formidable adversary. The Premier up to the last treated him with the gentleness an elder brother shows to a wayward cadet. It was only at the very last he broke out, and then over the sarcasm of his speech he threw the garment of high personal praise.

With Lord Salisbury the case is different. He is not only a Cecil, but is head of the family. Moreover, he has been a Minister, and with characteristically fantastic temerity, his father having resolved, as it was cynically put at the time, to strengthen his Government, made him Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Next to being full Secretary of State, with a seat in the Government, this particular post is the most important in the House of Commons. Colleagues of similar rank at the Home Office, the Board of Trade, even at the War Office or the Admiralty, may muddle and blunder without shaking the universe. But the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, his chief being in the House of Lords, can, as Lord Cranborne more than once testified, make things hum beyond the limits of these islands.

His remark in debate on a critical turn in affairs in the Far East will ever keep his memory green. Strong representations came from both sides of the House urging the desirability of drawing closer friendly bonds with Japan by a specific Treaty. Had Japan been

invited to enter upon such undertaking? was persistently asked. Whereat the statesman standing at the Ministerial box in the House of Commons turned scornfully upon his interlocutor and said, "We do not ask for Treaties; we grant them."

It was magnificent, it was Salisburian, but it was not diplomacy. Lord Lansdowne felt the necessity of taking early opportunity of endeavouring to explain away the indiscretion of his junior. In effect he told Japan that "it was only Fanny's pretty way." But these ways, wandering over the barbed fenced field of foreign politics, are apt to lead to disaster.

If promotion went by merit, and in the interest of the State it were felt imperative to give another scion of the House of Cecil to its service, it is not the ex-Premier's eldest son who would have been seated on the Treasury Bench. But primogeniture has its rights as well as its duties, and Lord Cranborne was by a fond parent nominated Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

In other capacity he would do very well indeed. He would, for example, make an excellent private Member. As a speaker he has vastly improved with practice, though still falling short of the supremacy in debate of his younger brother. Haughtily shy, he is habitually *gauche*, saying the wrong thing in the worst way at the most inconvenient moment. Beneath this manner, which even more assuredly than reading and writing comes by nature, there are sterling qualities which time and experience may ripen. He has those natural endowments of innate honesty and uncompromising truthtelling (according to his lights) which commanded the respect of the House of Commons. He has also the faculty of taking pains, and shirked no labour

connected with his office. In brief, when in the course of events he took his seat in the House of Lords, he was something above the average level of the Peerage, and might, if he unreservedly gave himself up to the task, do something to relieve the Upper Chamber from its pervading dulness.

The Cecils have for centuries enjoyed, have, in truth, honourably won, a fair share of the fat things of Ministerial office. According to that impartial and dispassionate observer, Mr. "Tommy" Bowles, the lineal descendant of Queen Elizabeth's great counsellor erred a little in the direction of appreciation of the family's heaven-born aptitude for State employment. His son and heir could well afford to stand aside, leaving the prizes for less accustomed hands.

For the House of Cecil the attractions of Ministerial office do not rest upon the sordid considerations that govern lesser folk. They have always belonged to the governing classes, and have hereditary hunger for power. In Parliament power is not necessarily connected with place. Now that the great Lord Salisbury is withdrawn from the scene, the most powerful man in the House of Lords is the Earl of Rosebery, who, with all the world before him where to choose, elects to plough a lonely furrow. No one rising to debate is listened to more eagerly. It would be too much to say that his views and arguments influence votes. Paradoxical as it may appear in connection with what is avowedly a debating Assembly, cases where that miracle is wrought either in Lords or Commons are exceedingly rare. But Lord Rosebery's speeches distinctly turn the current of debate in the House of Lords, and have their effect on public opinion outside. Of public men, the one most successful in resisting the influence of

Lord Rosebery's speeches, as far as influence is discernible in action, is Lord Rosebery himself.

The fourth Marquis of Salisbury will never reach the altitude of Lord Rosebery, undermined though it be by a certain curious irresolution. But the *rôle* of Independent Member, a sort of Providence sitting up aloft looking after the business of the Peers and welfare of the nation, would suit him admirably. He might then without danger, with distinct advantage to current debate, cultivate inherited germs of blurting out inconvenient truths, and might think aloud about his fellowmen, particularly his personal friends and former colleagues, habits that made his distinguished father so interesting in the House of Lords, so perturbing on the public platform.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD COURTNEY.

On an evening in June in the Session of 1897, the House of Commons enjoyed one of its little jokes, the dearer to its heart by reason of monopoly of appreciation. The business before it was consideration of a cluster of Water Bills. Mr. Chaplin, in his capacity as President of the Local Government Board, moved the first of a long series of new clauses. These, he explained, were the fruit of consideration of the epidemic that had devastated Maidstone, following on the use of impure water. Mr. Mellor, speaking with the weight of authority pertaining to an ex-Chairman of Ways and Means, protested against altering the law of the land through the agency of a private Bill. This view was accepted on both sides of the House, and in the end Mr. Chaplin found it desirable to capitulate.

At this stage a sturdy figure, principally, certainly most prominently, arrayed in a yellow waistcoat, the like of which was never seen on sea or land, uprose from a corner seat below the Gangway, and in grave, solemn voice observed :—

"I cannot help thinking that in this matter the House is moved by a sort of pedantry."

A smile flashed back from the crowded House upon the sheen of the yellow waistcoat. A titter followed, then a laugh. In a moment, to the marvel of the stranger in the gallery wondering where the joke came in, the chamber was filled with a merry roar.

The Member on his feet was Mr. Courtney, and there was something about him, of all men, rebuking "a sort of pedantry," that tickled the legislative midriff. He did not mean to assume a pedantic air when addressing the House, and doubtless was unaware of the tendency. Nevertheless there it was, ingrained in the constitution, current in the blood.

The accident of training and position had much to do with it. For some time in early life Lord Courtney was a private tutor at his University. In his fortieth year he was appointed to the chair of Political Economy at University College, London, and, of course, had to lecture. Earlier he was engaged as a writer in the leading columns of the *Times*, a position from which the most modest-mannered man learns to regard his fellow-kind with a certain air of superiority. For two years he was Examiner in Constitutional History at the University of London, and, finally, came to be Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons; an autocratic position, second only to that of the Speaker.

In view of this succession of circumstances it is not to be wondered at if, when addressing the House of Commons in his capacity as a private Member, he should lapse into something of a Moses-on-the-mountain manner. At the outset of his Parliamentary career this irritated the House, but by long wont and usage has come to be regarded with amused benevolence.

Born a Cornishman, Lord Courtney has loyally devoted his Parliamentary services to his county. He appeared on an electoral platform for the first time in 1874, when he fought Mr. Horsman at Liskeard. It is interesting to recall the fact that a quarter of a century ago Liskeard returned a Member of the House of Commons on a total poll of 663 votes. With almost

even-handed impartiality these were divided between the two candidates. Mr. Horsman, having five more than Mr. Courtney, also had the seat. Two years later Mr. Horsman's occasionally brilliant, on the whole disappointing, career closed in death, and Mr. Courtney was elected on much the same poll by a majority of over a hundred.

This was on December 22nd, 1876. Mr. Courtney was too good a citizen to leave the House of Commons long lacking the benefit of his counsel. I have no recollection of his maiden speech; but as early as the first week in June, in his first Session, not quite four months old, he suddenly achieved fame. It was a Wednesday afternoon, and the House was engaged on the second reading of the Woman's Suffrage Bill. That is one of several subjects on the flank of Imperial politics Mr. Courtney has made especially his own. He was anxious above all things that a division should be taken on the second reading. He succeeded in talking out the Bill.

It was a quarter-past five when he rose with a portentous sheaf of notes in his hand. At that time debate on Wednesdays might be continued till a quarter to six, when, if not otherwise concluded, it would automatically stand adjourned. Mr. Courtney had something under half an hour at his disposal, and had he been left undisturbed, might have used the opportunity to advantage. It happened that thus early in his career he had succeeded in alienating the House, a position long ago retrieved by fuller acquaintance with his sterling qualities and his high capacity. There are few things the House of Commons resents more hotly than haste on the part of a new Member to assist it with his counsel. At this epoch Mr. Courtney had strong views on the Eastern

Question and was not diffident in setting them forth. Some weeks precedent to this Wednesday afternoon he had, in spite of protests, not least persistent on the Liberal side, insisted on bringing forward a motion raising a delicate phase of the everlasting problem. When he now appeared on an off day, plainly prepared to deliver a lecture on women's rights, Members, in any circumstances shamelessly predisposed to make fun of the topic, resolved to "have a lark."

He had not proceeded far when there were cries for the division. This interruption he met with angry rebuke that fanned the flame. For twenty minutes by Westminster clock he stood and faced the storm. Opposite and around him was a crowd of hilarious gentlemen shouting "'Vide! 'vide! 'vide!" When the roar of sound momentarily fell Mr. Courtney, raising his stentorian voice to thunderous heights, attempted to get in the fragment of a sentence. Then, as the winter storm surging through the forlorn trees, having apparently blown itself out, suddenly rises with angrier roar, so his voice was drowned in a fresh shout of "'Vide! 'vide! 'vide!"

It was characteristic of his courage that, though still a new Member, presumably in awe of the House, he for twenty minutes faced the music, the roar rising to a final yell of exultation when, as the hand of the clock pointed a quarter to six, the Speaker rose with a call of "Order! order!" and the champion of women's rights sat down, having talked out the Bill he had risen to advocate.

Apart from its personal connections, this scene is historic as beating the record in its own line, and as marking a state of things that would not be possible to-day. There was no closure in the Session of 1876.

A rough substitute was found in this deafening shout for the division—a rude expedient which the Speaker did not feel himself authorised to rebuke. With the closure at hand, the Speaker of a modern Parliament would not permit for the duration of three minutes such a scene as was in Mr. Courtney's personal recollection prolonged for half an hour.

When, in 1880, Gladstone came back to power, master of a great majority, Mr. Courtney had so far redeemed this early failure as to be regarded among the Premier's inevitable choice for the new Ministry. This was verified to the extent that he was offered a Lordship of the Treasury. He declined to begin a Ministerial career at the very bottom rung of the ladder, and through the Session of 1880 enjoyed a season of independence below the Gangway. In December of that year, he was appointed Under-Secretary at the Home Office. Less than a year later came promotion to the Colonial Office, and in May, 1882, when poor Lord Frederick Cavendish went to the Irish Office on his way to assassination in Phœnix Park, Mr. Courtney became Financial Secretary to the Treasury. Here he had full scope for his business habits and capacity. He fully equalled the expectations formed of him, attaining the position of a model Financial Secretary. Under his care the machinery of legislative business worked with unbroken smoothness.

In 1884 he resigned, the Financial Secretaryship proving to be his last Ministerial office. When, in 1886, the split in the Liberal Party on the question of Home Rule opened and widened, Mr. Courtney threw in his lot with the section of the party who seceded from the leadership of Mr. Gladstone. The "Unionists" coming into power in 1886, he was rewarded for this

preference by being appointed to the Chair of Ways and Means.

This was a position that brought into play all his special gifts and faculties. To begin with, he is a man of almost aggressive integrity. Through his chequered political career never once has fluttered whisper of accusation that he was, in word or deed, actuated by other than conscientious motive. He is further endowed with a mind at once acute and judicial. So prevailing is this last quality that he revolts from the inequalities of our existing electoral system and hankers after proportional representation.

The ceremony of the induction of a Chairman of Committees is appropriately businesslike. When a Speaker is elected there is a certain stately ceremony. He is proposed and seconded by two of the most important Members on his own side. If, as in the case of Mr. Gully, his election be opposed, Members of equal standing on the other side espouse the cause of his rival. Debate being thus formally opened, any Member may take part in it. On one occasion, when Mr. Peel was re-elected, an Irish Member seized the opportunity of protesting against the choice on the ground that earlier experience of his manner had found him somewhat repressive of Irish eloquence. Had this ceremony of introduction pertained to the installation of a Chairman of Committees, the Irish Members would undoubtedly have had something to say when it was proposed that Mr. Courtney should take the Chair.

What happens on such occasion is that the Leader of the House observes, studiously *sotto voce*, 'I move that Mr. So-and-so take the Chair.' The Chairman-designate, fortuitously close at hand, and, by good fortune, arrayed in the evening dress indispensable to the work of

Chairman of Committees, even at a morning sitting, pops into the Chair, submits the question that a private Bill shall pass an immaterial stage, and before the House quite realises it has got a new Chairman, he is out of the Chair, and, as the Parliamentary Reports put it, "the House resumes."

Mr. Courtney stepped into his seat in the House of Commons from the Radical platform. Up to the end of the Session of 1885 he steadfastly voted with that section of the party which always went further in the direction of supporting the Irish Nationalists than did any other. The Irish Members with special chagrin saw him at a critical epoch take his place in the ranks of the anti-Home Rulers. To find him, as they put it, benefiting thereby to the extent of a snug berth, to which pertained a salary of 2,500*l.* per year, and an average of five months' holiday, was more than they were disposed to bear with equanimity. Had he been a weak irresolute man, the Irish Members would have made his occupancy of the Chair a melancholy experience. He is not a weak man, either physically or mentally, and in matters of opinion irresolution is the last charge that might be brought against him.

I remember only one occasion when, in the habitual struggle with the Irish Members, Mr. Courtney gave himself away, and that was a trivial matter. One night Sir Richard Webster was defending himself against an attack made upon him from the Front Opposition Bench. Mr. Biggar, then still with us, and some other members of the Irish Party, who had perforce maintained long silence in the Probate Court what time the Attorney-General laboriously indicted them before the Commission of Judges, eagerly seized this opportunity of paying off old scores. They accompanied the

Attorney-General's remarks by a running commentary varied by outbursts of ironical cheering. After long endurance—the House was in Committee—the Chairman rose, and in stern voice said, "I must order the honourable Member for South Mayo to retire."

The Member for South Mayo was Mr. J. F. X. O'Brien, who long sat aloft in high supremacy over his fellow Members. Some of them had been in prison. The many initialled O'Brien was actually ordered to be hung, and might have been drawn and quartered. Forty-one years ago he was tried for high treason and sentenced to death. At the last moment the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, amnesty following some years later. Mr. O'Brien is the mildest-mannered man that ever looked the gallows in the face, not to mention contemplation of ultimate dismemberment. That in such a *mêlée* he should have been picked out as a ringleader struck the House, even in a moment of excitement, with a sense of the ludicrous. This was increased when Mr. O'Brien, pale and frightened, whimpered, "I did not open my lips."

Testimony from those seated near him convinced Mr. Courtney that he had made a mistake. That is more or less permissible with ordinary humanity. It is fatal to the reputation of a Chairman of Ways and Means. To persist in enforcing the consequences of a proved mistake was, of course, not to be thought of. To acknowledge error would be embarrassing. Mr. Courtney must say something, for he had ordered a Member to withdraw. He was equal to the occasion. Having publicly accused Mr. O'Brien of having done something it was clear he had not done, he "accepted the honourable Member's disclaimer," and called on the next speaker.

More blessed than Mesopotamia is the word "disclaimer."

This incident is chiefly interesting as showing the constant strain under which a Chairman of Committees sits hour after hour in the fierce light that beats upon the Chair. In nightly practice the position of Chairman of Committees is even more arduous than that of the Speaker. Being hedged about with less authority, the atmosphere and tone of the Committee differs in subtle fashion when the same body of men are earlier or later on the same day sitting in the same chamber in the full majesty of the House. Moreover, the style of debate varies, being more conversational in manner, with quicker touch-and-go, calling for closest attention on the part of the president and lightning-like readiness to decide a delicate point of conduct or procedure suddenly submitted.

One of Mr. Courtney's monumental achievements in the Chair was the smooth, business-like passage of the English Local Government Bill. It is probable that, with the exception of Mr. Ritchie, the Minister in charge, he was the only man who thoroughly grasped the nightly, hourly changing aspect of this stupendous measure, with its one hundred and sixty-two clauses, its five schedules, its eighty folio pages of amendments. For ninety-nine out of a hundred Members in that Session of 1888 duty to their country was discharged if they remained within sound of the division bell, in the Reading-room, the Smoking-room, or on the Terrace. The Chairman of Committees must needs sit hour after hour through the long night, not only watching the drift of debate round the particular amendment under discussion, but recalling the slow course the Bill had already fought its way through, and the devious plain

that lay before it. He must be courteous but firm, steeped in lore of Parliamentary procedure, watchful and ready: out of the Chair an ordinary Member, subject, like the rest, to rule and discipline; in the Chair absolute autocrat, to be arraigned only by formal and final appeal to the regularly constituted House.

These were conditions Mr. Courtney through his six years' tenancy of the Chair of Committees admirably filled. He did not please everybody—a success rare in human achievement. His manner lacked the polish of Mr. Arthur Balfour, or the grand urbanity of Mr. Gladstone. He ruled with an iron hand, not wasting precious time in pulling on silken and, on the whole, inefficacious gloves. Never once through his Chairmanship did breath of suspicion of his strict impartiality or of his honesty of purpose find its way into the sometimes heated chamber.

The highest tribute that could be paid to his success in the Chair was the conviction held by some old Parliamentary hands in the Parliament of 1892, that had he been retained as Chairman of Committees, the career of the Home Rule Bill through Committee would have been far less turbulent. It was at the time a common thing to hear Gladstone blamed for lack of judgment in this matter. I have good reason to believe that when the new Parliament met after the election of 1892, Gladstone was personally disposed to move Mr. Courtney into the Chair of Committees. In this, as in some other matters of importance vital to the Liberal Party, his hand was forced from below the Gangway on his own side of the House. Irish Nationalists and British Radicals were one in their determination to oust from the Chair of Committees the once Radical-Nationalist Member for Liskeard.

By a painful coincidence, Mr. Courtney's promotion to higher place was barred by an analogous demonstration made from quite a different quarter. On the retirement of Mr. Arthur Peel from the Speaker's Chair, it seemed inevitable that Mr. Courtney should succeed him. Even his personal enemies—and there are such—would admit that by his tenancy of the Chair in Committee of Ways and Means he had shown himself qualified for the canopied chair behind him. His political friends were in a majority that rendered opposition futile. It was no secret that opposition to such election would not come from the leaders of the Liberal Party. Sir William Harcourt, sinking all feeling of resentment at the secession of a former colleague, warmly espoused Mr. Courtney's cause. Opposition came from within the Cabinet. According to common report, a Minister not, as a rule, slow to urge the claims to promotion of Members of his own section of the "Unionist" Party, stood in Mr. Courtney's way to the Speaker's Chair.

We know now that he was only anticipating another and a darker influence. Had Mr. Courtney been elected Speaker in the Spring of 1895, he must needs, owing to physical infirmity, have presently retired. There are few sorer calamities that could befall a man of active habits, a scholar, and a lover of books, than the deepening shade of blindness. Shortly after his return to the status of a private Member of the House of Commons it gathered over Mr. Courtney—a calamity met with a courage and serenity of mind that extort the admiration of all who have eyes to see.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

THE first time I noticed Lord Randolph Churchill in the House of Commons was on a May day in 1875. Sir Charles Dilke, pursuing what threatened to be an annual crusade against unreformed corporations, made merry at the expense of Woodstock, then represented by one who, up to this time, was known in the Parliamentary arena simply as a cadet of the ducal house of Marlborough. From the third bench behind that on which Ministers ought to have been sitting rose a well-groomed young man with pale face, protuberant eyes, and a ponderous moustache, with which as he spoke he nervously toyed. Members asking each other "Who's this?" learned that it was the Member for Woodstock rising to defend the corporation of the borough that sent him to Parliament.

Though assisted by notes, on which the speech was fully written out, the young Member was so nervous, his voice so badly pitched, his delivery so faulty, that there was difficulty in following his argument. Here and there flashed forth a scathing sentence that made it worth while to attempt to catch the rest. When he sat down Lord Randolph had made his mark, had established himself as an interesting personality, in an Assembly in which within ten years he was predominant.

Three years later he justified the promise made in

this casual speech. It was in March, 1878, he appeared in the *rôle*, subsequently familiar, of candid friend of a Conservative Ministry. Mr. Sclater-Booth, President of the Local Government Board, brought in a County Government Bill, whose main object was to transfer the administration of counties to boards elected partly by the county magistrates, partly by the Board of Guardians. The rejection of the Bill was moved by Mr. Rylands, a fussy Radical who, through successive Sessions, was, like Martha, troubled about many things. To the astonishment of the House Lord Randolph Churchill rose from the Ministerial side to second the amendment. The personal conjunction was piquant enough to attract attention. Lord Randolph's speech held it in close grip.

"I do not," said the Member for Woodcock, as Jacob Bright in his solitary unpremeditated flash of humour once called him, "want to say anything disagreeable; but I have ransacked the whole arsenal of denunciatory phrases and have not found any that adequately express my estimation—or rather lack of estimation—of the measure." Failing full success in that direction, he characterised the Bill as of "Brummagem make, stuffed with all the little dodges of a President of the Local Government Board when he comes to attempt to legislate upon a great question."

This brought him to the President of the Local Government Board, seated massive, apparently impassive, on the Treasury Bench, over which Randolph threateningly towered.

"Remarkable," he murmured, contemplating the back of Sclater-Booth's head, "how often we find mediocrity dowered with a double-barrelled name."

"I have no objection," he continued, "to the President

of the Local Government Board dealing with such questions as the salaries of Inspectors of Nuisances. But I do entertain the strongest possible objection to his coming down here, with all the appearance of a great law-giver, to repair, according to his small ideas and in his little way, breaches in the British Constitution."

In these later years frank criticism by private Members of their pastors and masters, on either Front Bench, is so common as to attract little attention. In 1878 it was not altogether unknown below the Gangway on the Liberal side. It was quite new with Conservatives. As Randolph spoke the Ministerialists sat silent in pained amazement; whilst the Liberals laughed and cheered as they gleefully watched Sclater-Booth, bolt upright on the Treasury Bench, with head slightly thrown back, one leg crossed over the other, hands clasped across his portly figure, an unwonted flush on his stolid countenance.

The sheaf of notes held in Lord Randolph's right hand testified to careful preparation. At this time, and for some years later, he was in the habit of writing out his speeches, learning them by heart, and reciting them. Amid the excitement of his attack on Sclater-Booth his notes got inextricably mixed up. He attempted to sort them by arranging them between the open fingers of either hand—a device that had comical result. Waving his hands about in the heat of oratory, the action suggested that he was playing with what schoolboys call clappers. Happily the laughter and cheering from the delighted Opposition was so persistent that he had time and opportunity to find successive clues, and triumphantly proceeded to the close of a speech that established his position as an original, daring debater.

Having joined a turbulent Radical in opposing the

measure of a Conservative Government, Lord Randolph proceeded to make things more unpleasant for right honourable friends on the Treasury Bench. He denounced the Bill as "this most Radical and Democratic measure, this crowning desertion of Tory principles, this supreme violation of political honesty." There was further echo of Disraeli attacking Peel in the peroration. "I have," he said, "raised the last wail of the expiring Tory Party. They have undergone a good deal. They have swallowed an immense amount of nastiness. They have had their banner dragged along many a muddy path. It has been slapped in many a filthy puddle till it is so altered that nobody can recognise it."

After this outburst the young Member for Woodstock, to the relief of Ministers,—more especially to the hapless President of the Local Government Board,—practically retired from the scene. It is true that the following month he, with characteristic audacity, stirred the deep pools of the Irish Education question. But his attendance was rare, and thereafter for a while his silence complete. It seemed as if he had finally relapsed into the state of indifference to political ambition and Parliamentary allurements that marked his earlier manhood.

It is a coincidence notable in view of subsequent events that on the threshold of their careers Arthur Balfour and Randolph Churchill were alike indifferent, even inimical, to a Parliamentary career. By further coincidence, it was an accidental vacancy in a family pocket borough that led both to Westminster and a place in history. In the autumn of 1873 Mr. Balfour took counsel with his uncle as to what he should do with his young life. It happened that a vacancy was pending

in the representation of the family borough. "Why not sit for Hertford?" Lord Salisbury, at his wits' end for form of advice, suggested. After some hesitation the future Prime Minister accepted the invitation. Lord Randolph was almost driven by his father into the Parliamentary seat of Woodstock. Hertford and Woodstock have gone the way of all small boroughs lying in the pathway of a Juggernaut Reform Bill. The names of their representatives elected to the Parliament of 1874-80 will live for ever.

It was accident that brought Lord Randolph finally out of his shell. By fresh coincidence the same episode was the occasion of Mr. Balfour's emerging from the condition of Philosophic Doubt with which hitherto he regarded the assumed privilege and pleasure of membership of the House of Commons. In the haze that gathers round events even so recent as a quarter of a century ago, it is generally understood that Lord Randolph devised the Bradlaugh difficulty—that thin edge of the wedge inserted with fatal result in the framework of the great Liberal majority in the earliest stage of its existence. That is an error. It was Sir Henry Wolff who first raised objection to the Member for Northampton taking the oath. He was discouraged, his action discountenanced, by Sir Stafford Northcote. Sir John Gorst, not yet knighted, rallied to his side; some of the country gentlemen, scenting sport, began to cheer the grave and reverend champion of Christianity. It was on the 3rd May, 1880, that Bradlaugh raised the controversy by presenting himself at the table claiming the right to affirm instead of taking the oath. It was not till the 24th of May that Randolph Churchill appeared on the scene.

With characteristic acumen and industry he had

spent the interval in studying Bradlaugh's published writings. He brought down with him a copy of one pamphlet entitled "The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick." Having read a passage, he flung the book on the floor and stamped upon it. This reminiscence of Burke and his dagger, in analogous fashion used to punctuate a passage in impassioned speech, momentarily took away the breath of the crowded audience. When it was recovered, Ministerialists loudly laughed. In the end, as we know, it proved no laughing matter for them. As Mr. John Morley testifies, the controversy thus begun "went on as long as the Parliament, clouded the radiance of the party triumph, threw the new Government at once into a minority, and dimmed the ascendency of the great Minister."

Incidentally the Fourth Party was created. Various explanations of the origin of the historic name are current. Some find it in the fact that it was composed of four persons, "which," as Euclid emphatically remarks, "is absurd." Mr. Winston Churchill suggests its origin in an interjected conversation in debate. A Member affirming that there were two great parties in the State, Mr. Parnell interjected, "Three." Lord Randolph, going one better, cried "Four." That incident may have contributed to the vogue of the phrase. It actually had its origin in a passage in a speech by Mr. Frank Hugh O'Donnell, who, alluding to a condition of things at the time prominent in the French Legislature, named the Irish Nationalists "Le Tiers Parti." The suggestion of a Fourth Party thereupon becomes obvious.

Absence of premeditation in connection with an epoch-making combination was attested by the circumstance that when Sir Henry Wolff and Mr. John Gorst,

seated on the Front Bench below the Gangway, opened the Bradlaugh business, Lord Randolph was settled on the third bench above the Gangway, corresponding with the place occupied by him during his first Parliament. Warming to the work, he found it desirable to be in close communication with his new allies, and accordingly changed his quarters. His supremacy was speedily asserted. Paul Drummond Wolff may have planted the sapling; Apollos Randolph Churchill watered it so effectually that its proportions spread till they overtopped the trees of the forest. Within a fortnight of his appearance below the Gangway he was the acknowledged leader of the Fourth Party, now recruited by the languorous figure, the occasional attendance, of Mr. Arthur Balfour.

According to long-established tradition, broken only in the case of Parnell, who cherished inflexible scorn of all precedents of a Saxon Parliament, leaders of sectional parties, however minute, must needs hold a corner seat whence they address the House. At the time when Lord Randolph assumed Leadership of the Fourth Party, all in a row on the Front Bench below the Gangway, the corner seat was held by Beresford Hope, an old esteemed Member whose Batavian grace Disraeli in a historic passage recognised. Apart from his high Parliamentary position, he was Arthur Balfour's uncle, and must needs be entreated gently. For the greater part of the Session of 1880 he remained in near neighbourhood with the lively group. Approaching a dazed condition, he remembered the fact that though as a matter of practice the bench flanking the table to the left of the Speaker is reserved for ex-Ministers, Privy Councillors have equal right to share its accommodation. One afternoon to the surprise, when they realised the situation, to the delight,

of the House, Beresford Hope passed his accustomed seat, and, crossing the Gangway, took up his quarters on the Front Opposition Bench.

"They made it too hot for me," he whispered in the sympathetic ear of Sir Richard Cross, whose connection with W. H. Smith in a new Parliamentary firm of "Marshall & Snelgrove" Lord Randolph, scornful of spotless respectability, was accustomed to affirm. The Leader of the Fourth Party succeeded to the vacant seat, jumping upon it and boisterously waving his hat when, five years later, his work in Opposition was done, his triumph complete in the downfall of a Ministry which in 1880 came from the polls apparently impregnable.

During the more or less tumultuous five Sessions that limited the life of the Parliament elected in 1880, Lord Randolph Churchill increased in esteem of Parliament and the country day by day. Having once put his hand to the plough, he, to the surprise of old friends, showed no sign of turning back. Familiar with his impulsive nature, they expected that after the spurt in the Bradlaugh business he would once more, as he did after crushing Sclater-Booth, dawdle back into the idleness of the man about town. On the contrary, he stuck to his post with a constancy that left no opportunity neglected. He had the advantage, attractive in the House of Commons, of being the impartial critic alike of Ministers and ex-Ministers. On the whole, he paid more deference to Mr. Gladstone than to his nominal Leader, Sir Stafford Northcote.

Sir Stafford bore his cross with pathetic meekness. Once, to the huge delight of the House, he turned and rent his tormentor. Interposing in a controversy between the two Front Benches, Lord Randolph moved an amendment which, if carried, would have

extricated Ministers from a difficulty. "The action of the noble lord," said Sir Stafford, "reminds me of the practice of the confederate of the thimble-rigger on the racecourse. 'A bonnet' he is called, I believe; his business being, whilst concealing personal knowledge of the operator and complicity with his game, to assist it by egging on the public to take a hand."

No one enjoyed this double-edged stroke more than Lord Randolph. Possibly his delight was increased by the fact that Sir Stafford of all men had managed, without being called to order by the Speaker, to liken Mr. Gladstone to a thimble-rigger. Sir Stafford's combativeness was exhausted by this flash of barbed wit. Once, early in the Session of 1883, he wrote a private letter remonstrating with the Leader of the Fourth Party upon the appearance of what he regarded as an inspired paragraph in the morning papers, announcing that in a certain contingency he would act against the Front Opposition Bench. The reply he received did not encourage further correspondence.

Lord Randolph had no personal animosity towards Sir Stafford—one of the sweetest-natured, highest-principled men who ever attempted to breast the masterful tide of political life. He honestly believed that his Leadership of the Party in the Commons was fatal to the interests and prospects of the Conservative Party. He was, accordingly, almost brutally implacable in his pursuit, finally succeeding, against the heart's desire of Lord Salisbury, in driving him out of the Commons. When the end of the Gladstone Government was in sight, some one asked Sir Stafford Northcote, "What place will you give Randolph when your Government is formed?" "Ask, rather," replied the veteran statesman, "what place will he give me?"

The words were spoken in bitter jest. As the proverb affirms, many a true word is spoken in jest.

Another occupant of the Front Opposition Bench whom Randolph "couldn't abear" was Sir Richard Cross. His native mediocrity, made prominent by a certain pomposity of manner familiar in chairmen of Quarter Sessions, rankled in his bosom. With W. H. Smith he was somewhat impatient. But that gentleman's modest manner, concealing sterling merit, disarmed animosity.

There was an amusing scene in the House in the Session of 1882 illustrating this little prejudice. An amendment to a Bill before the House was moved without notice and carried. Gladstone, in charge of the Bill, submitted a consequential amendment. Naturally it was not on the printed paper, and Lord Randolph, discussing it, was at a loss to recall the precise phraseology. Sir Richard Cross, above all things a man of business, made a note of the Amendment as it was read out from the Chair. With shrewd idea of propitiating the terrible young man below the Gangway, he, with engaging smile, handed him his note. The consequences were akin to what followed in the case of a man who, fleeing from a grizzly bear, remembered he had a bun in his pocket, and stopped to present the refreshment to his pursuer. Poor Sir Richard was snapped up, body and bun.

"A pretty pass we've come to in the House of Commons," said Lord Randolph, with dainty repugnance holding the sheet of paper between finger and thumb, "when we have to consider amendments passed about from hand to hand on dirty bits of paper."

The smile faded from Sir Richard's countenance. He, G.C.B., ex-Home Secretary, trusted lieutenant of

Benjamin Disraeli, had condescendingly gone out of his way to pay personal attention to a young and unofficial Member, and had been rewarded by public accusation of harbouring a dirty piece of paper.

Lord Randolph and his merry men were always ready for a lark at the expense of portentous personages on the Front Opposition Bench. One night, the business on the paper approaching conclusion, Sir Stafford and his colleagues seized the opportunity of going off to bed. "Come along," said Randolph to Drummond Wolff, and crossing the Gangway, followed by two-thirds of his party, he seated himself in the place of the Leader of the Opposition. Thence he raised debate *apropos des bottes*, which the three kept going for an hour, to the increasing anger of Ministers necessarily kept in their places, and the amusement of a small body of Members on both sides who had agreeably dined.

Lord Randolph's often successfully concealed admiration for Gladstone was based upon intellectual sympathy. If gratitude played any part in politics, which it notoriously does not, his esteem would have been supported on personal grounds. Having once devoted himself to political life, Lord Randolph was irresistible, his goal assured. But Gladstone gave him a good send-off at the start, and spared no pains to keep him going. With the generous instinct of a noble nature, he, at the outset, recognised the capacity and genius of his ruthless assailant, and missed no opportunity of paying tribute to it. He habitually conveyed what to an unofficial Member is the compliment, rare in a Prime Minister, of following him in debate. Towards the close of the long campaign terminating in Ministerial disaster, mainly consequent on Lord Randolph's action, he instinctively, doubtless unconsciously, addressed his

argument not to the Leader of the Opposition, but to the young man toying with his moustache on the corner seat below the Gangway. Lord Randolph was not slow to perceive the advantage this secured for him. It would have been fatal to his aspirations and plans to have been severely ignored. When by accident approach to that calamity was indicated, the Fourth Party proceeded to "draw Gladstone," as they put it.

Committee, wherein a member may speak as often as human patience will endure, was their favourite field for this sport. Lord Randolph would lead off, drawing that child of nature, Gladstone, into lengthy reply. When the Premier resumed his seat, Drummond Wolff rose, and with profuse declaration of deference asked for information on another point. Up got the Premier, brimming with energy and another speech. In this the subtle mind of John Gorst discovered a flaw, which he did not doubt arose from misapprehension of what his honourable friend the member for Christchurch had said. On this he laboured for a quarter of an hour or more, Gladstone intently listening, whilst his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, conscious of the snare, tossed about in despair. The temptation to instruct three guileless young men, evidently searchers after truth, certainly most deferential in their recognition of age and experience, was too much for the Premier, who eagerly sprang to his feet with a third speech.

Thus did Lord Randolph's strategy, excelling the poet's bedstead, contrive a treble debt to pay. It wasted the time of the House; it undermined the authority of the Premier; and it kept the Fourth Party well to the front.

With the formation of Lord Salisbury's second Government, consequent on the rout of the Home

Rulers at the poll in 1886, Lord Randolph reached his zenith. Mr. Chamberlain, friend and ally in spite of what happened consequent upon the Aston Park riots, was so moved that he made rare incursion into the Latin tongue. Writing on the 18th of June, when the composition of the new Government was practically complete, he exclaimed: "What a triumph! You have won all along the line. *Moriturus te saluto.*" The Marquis of Salisbury, installed as Prime Minister, was the nominal, of course the ultimate, dispenser of Ministerial prizes. Lord Randolph was the absolute dispenser of patronage.

Having selected his own position, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Randolph did not forget comrades in the fight that resulted in splendid victory. He wrote to Lord Salisbury saying Drummond Wolff ought to be made a Privy Councillor and John Gorst appointed Under-Secretary to the India Office. Whether in this last suggestion he was influenced by consideration of the fact that his ancient animosity, Sir Richard Cross—who he insisted should leave the House of Commons solaced with a peerage—was to be head of the India Office, is not known. Quick-witted, sharp-tongued John Gorst was exactly the man to buzz unpleasantly about the ears of arch-mediocrity. His famous speech upon what is known as "the Manipur incident," Sir Richard Cross during its delivery being seated in the Peers' Gallery, of itself fulfilled any possible expectation of fun cherished by the prophetic soul of Lord Randolph.

Lord Salisbury looked after his nephew Arthur, making him Secretary for Scotland, thus completing provision for the Fourth Party. That was natural and expected. Where astonishment deepened to consternation

was on the pitchforking into the Home Office of Mr. Henry Matthews, a gentleman not only untrained in administrative affairs, but new to Parliamentary life. Lord Randolph highly esteemed his capacity, proved in the professional conduct of his case when he carried into a court of law his charges against Mr. Chamberlain in respect of the Aston Park riots. The Premier naturally demurred to the unparalleled proceeding of making an outsider Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State. It was made clear to him that if Mr. Matthews were not made Home Secretary, he must be prepared to get along without Lord Randolph. With this pistol at his head, the autocrat in whom Bismarck discovered a lath painted to look like a blade of iron threw up his hands.

The new Parliament met on the 5th of August, 1886, and was prorogued on the 25th of September. The period was short. It sufficed to reveal a new phase of a many-sided character. At no period of his Parliamentary career did Lord Randolph display such high qualities as shone upon an astonished House during his term of Leadership. His uncurbed temper, his imperious manner, abruptly changing to one of boyish recklessness seemed fatal to success in the dignified office to which at the age of thirty-seven he was called. The poacher had been made head gamekeeper. Nowhere was the experiment watched with more nervous trepidation than on the Treasury Bench. That Lord Randolph felt the difficulty and delicacy of the situation was shown by his nervous manner when following Gladstone in debate on the Address. He speedily recovered full command of himself, and remained master of the situation. As Mr. Winston Churchill, a born Parliamentarian, whose father lives again in the personality

of a brilliant son, truly says, "Lord Randolph knew the House in all its moods. He humoured it, offended it, and soothed it again with practised deliberation. Yet he always appeared to be its servant."

The general verdict on his conduct was expressed in an autograph, much-prized, letter addressed to him by Queen Victoria on the eve of the Prorogation. "Lord Randolph," she wrote in the third-person form of address with which Majesty approaches meaner mortals, "has shown much skill and judgment in his Leadership during this exceptional Session of Parliament."

This fresh start in a career he jocularly said would lead to the Premiership and Westminster Abbey, closed in a blaze of triumph. He was as popular as he was powerful. Every one, save perhaps disappointed claimants for office and Ministerial colleagues whom he contemptuously called "the old gang," rejoiced in his prosperity. The shock was the greater when, exactly three months to a day after receiving the Queen's gracious letter of congratulation, there appeared in the *Times* announcement that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had resigned office. The occasion of the Cabinet quarrel rose out of circumstances now familiar. Lord Randolph, pledged to economy, had framed a Budget made impossible by the demands of the Army and Navy. Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty, yielded to the extent of modifying his demand by £700,000. Mr. W. H. Smith, with a tenacity unexpected from one of his mild and modest manner, was implacable. He declined to reduce his estimate by a penny. Lord Salisbury, eloquent with apology, stood by the head of the spending departments. Lord Randolph resigned.

There is no doubt he did not count upon his

withdrawal from the Ministry becoming effective. Regarding the persons seated round the Council table he felt he was indispensable. There was none among them who could stand up against Gladstone, either as Leader of the House or Chancellor of the Exchequer. Unfortunately for him, for the Conservative Party, and for the country, his gaze did not extend beyond the walls of the dingy house in Downing Street. He "forgot Goschen."

In the biography of his father, Mr. Winston Churchill throws doubt on the existence of this forgetfulness. As I gave currency to a phrase since become historic, this may be a convenient place for stating my authority. It was Lord Randolph himself. "A little less than a week after I had written to Lord Salisbury resigning the Chancellorship," he said, in words of which I made a note at the time, "I was walking up St. James's Street when I met ——" (mentioning the name of a lady well known in political and social circles). "She was driving, and stopped the carriage to speak to me. She asked how things were going on. I said I thought they were doing nicely. Hartington had refused to join them, and whom else could they get? 'Have you thought of Mr. Goschen?' she asked in voice and manner that indicated she knew more than the innocent inquiry indicated. It all flashed on me in a moment. I saw the game was lost. As I confessed to her, I had forgotten Goschen."

Shortly after this conversation I met the lady, happily still with us, and mentioned Lord Randolph's statement. She confirmed it with the curiously graphic remark: "Driving up St. James's Street, I never pass a certain lamp-post without thinking of Randolph—of the sudden change that came over his face when I mentioned

Mr. Goschen, and the abrupt salute with which he left me." He had played his game, laid his last treasured card on the table, and it was trumped.

When Parliament met for the Session of 1887, under the Leadership of Mr. W. H. Smith, there were reiterated rumours of reconciliation and return. Gradually they ebbed away, and Lord Randolph lapsed into the position of a private Member. His personal influence was scarcely less powerful than when he was in office. His every movement in and out of the House was watched with keen interest. His lightest word was reported. At an early stage of the new situation there were indications of a coalition between himself and Mr. Chamberlain. For a while they dreamed the old dream of a Central Party free from the vices and weakness inherent to political partnership, a brotherhood where none were for Party but all were for the State. Like earlier projects, since and before the time of Macaulay, it came to nothing. Presently, hasty words spoken on both sides brought about a coolness in the relations of two men attracted to each other by certain similarity of character.

Then came rupture. Lord Randolph held a safe seat in Paddington, but he had no sympathy with villadom, and yearned for a great constituency that would appreciate his democratic Toryism and strengthen his position as its apostle. Opportunity hailed him from Birmingham. John Bright was dead, and Central Birmingham, where by the irony of circumstance arising out of the Home Rule Bill the once ultra-Radical had been supported by the Tories, was looking about for a successor. Lord Randolph, whose personal popularity in the Midland metropolis was barely exceeded by Mr. Chamberlain's, eagerly accepted overtures inviting him to stand. On the 2nd April, 1889, a deputation representing

the Tories of the constituency arrived at the House of Commons with formal invitation. Lord Randolph's course seemed so clear, his mind was so joyously made up, that, pending the striking of five o'clock, the hour at which he was to receive the deputation, he instructed his friend, Louis Jennings, to draft an address to his Paddington constituents, severing his connection with the borough, and another to the electors of Central Birmingham accepting their invitation to contest the seat.

As at an earlier crisis he forgot Goschen, so now he left Mr. Chamberlain out of his calculation. The blending of the Liberal Unionist element with the main body of the Conservative forces was still so far from being complete that there existed an understanding whereby certain seats should be reserved for Liberal Unionists. Mr. Chamberlain claimed Central Birmingham as one. Even whilst the deputation were approaching Westminster, assured of the success of their mission, whilst Louis Jennings was penning the two election addresses, whilst Lord Randolph was preparing to receive the emissaries, Mr. Chamberlain was at work. He saw Sir Michael Hicks-Beach as representative of the Government, and warned him that Lord Randolph's candidature would mean disruption of the Unionist alliance. He dragged the unwilling figure of Lord Hartington to his side. In despair Sir Michael saw Lord Randolph and explained to him the peril of the situation. With that loyalty to former colleagues which on several critical occasions since he quitted the Ministry gave an air of irresolution to his actions, he left the matter in the hands of his old friend. The old friend loved Lord Randolph as a father loves a favourite son. But he loved his party more, and Lord Randolph was sacrificed.

It was, I think, the hardest blow of the many knocks that were battering out the still young life. He felt it even more acutely than the sudden halt in his Ministerial career in its most brilliant hour. I happened to be in the Lobby of the House of Commons when he came out of the Whips' room, where doom was spoken. He was so altered in personal appearance that for a moment I did not know him. Instead of the familiar swinging pace, with head slightly bent, but with swiftly glancing eyes, he walked with slow, weary tread, a look on his pallid face as if tears had been coursing down it. No one who knew him only in the fierce struggle of public life would have imagined him capable of such profound emotion. It was a blow from which he never recovered, though there was temporary re-birth of the ambition to represent something other than the *bourgeoise* of Paddington, when, little more than a year before his death, he announced his intention of standing for bustling Bradford.

Eleven months later another incident befell which again wounded him to the heart. When Lord Salisbury's Government announced their intention of appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into the *Times* allegation against Parnell, Lord Randolph, generously mindful of the peril into which his old colleagues were blundering, drew up a reasoned protest addressed to Mr. W. H. Smith. Amongst State papers it is a masterpiece of keen insight, clear argument, and remarkable prescience. Of course the "Old Gang" took no heed of counsel coming from this quarter, and affairs went on to the appointed end. When in March, 1890, the report of the Commission came before the House of Commons, Lord Randolph, in conjunction with his *fidus Achates*, Louis Jennings, drafted an amendment in which censure was strictly confined to the *Times*

ignoring the action of the Government in the matter. Mr. Jennings was in his place, prepared to move this amendment, expecting in accordance with custom that on resumption of the debate the Speaker would call upon him.

Lord Randolph, in his wilful way, had changed his mind, and in his imperious manner disregarded the claims of others, even though one might be his most intimate and faithful friend. To the astonishment of everyone, not least of Louis Jennings sitting on the bench behind him, he rose and delivered a speech in which he made an uncompromising attack upon the Government. When he sat down the benches began to empty. Interest in the situation was exhausted. Louis Jennings' amendment had crowded the House because it was understood, correctly as we know, that it was actually Lord Randolph's, and that he would support it by speech. On the contrary, he not only displaced the priority of the amendment, but delivered a speech wholly contrary to its spirit, being a bitter indictment of the Government.

Wounded in the house of a friend, Louis Jennings straightway severed his connection with one to whom for some years his services had been chiefly devoted. Lord Randolph, even as he sat down perceiving how matters stood, tore off scraps from his copy of the Orders, pencilled pathetic little messages, and had them passed on to Jennings, seated midway on the bench behind him. They met with no response, not even that of an angry look.

"Jennings has taken the needle," Lord Randolph said, coming up to me in the Lobby shortly after his speech. It was a quaint phrase I never heard before or since. It lingers in memory over the waste of years.

The episode had a personal bearing which brings into strong light one of the marked features of a strange character. Lord Randolph was a delightful person as long as he was pleased with his company or his surroundings. But he would not stand any nonsense in the way of difference from his expressed opinion. Slightly to vary the characteristics of the little girl of fable, when he was pleased he was very very nice, when he was crossed he was 'orrid. In the course of time he quarrelled with all his intimate co-workers, with the exception of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Ernest Beckett, now Lord Grimthorpe, his brother-in-law Lord Curzon, and Sir Henry Wolff. John Gorst and Henry Mathews were amongst other former friends and companions dear whom he ruthlessly cut.

My acquaintance, ripening into warm friendship, began early in his public career. It certainly was not nourished by monotonous adulation. In *Punch*, in the "Cross Bench" articles in the *Observer*, and elsewhere, I wrote of his Parliamentary phantasies with freedom untrammelled by private relationship. He seemed to enjoy rather than resent the criticism. During the Session of 1886 there appeared in the *Daily News* a leading article commenting rather sharply on a speech made by him the night before in the House. I was not the writer of the article, but chanced at the time to be editor of the paper. Looking in at the Lobby after the question hour, I was accustomed to stand by the chair of the chief doorkeeper, and Lord Randolph passing in or out invariably stopped for a friendly chat. On the evening of the appearance of this article he looked me straight in the face as he passed and walked on without a word.

Naturally I said nothing then, or later, and for four

years we were strangers. At the beginning of the Session of 1890 Louis Jennings several times approached me with intimation that Lord Randolph wanted to make up the quarrel. I said that he had deliberately cut me as I stood in my usual place in the Lobby, that I should be there every day after Questions, and if he came and spoke to me conversation might proceed as nearly as possible in continuance of what we were saying the last time we conversed. On the next evening Lord Randolph came up with outstretched hand and beaming face. There was no apology or explanation, only the old friendship was renewed, not to be broken again save by the hand of death.

In the old familiar way he asked me to dine with him at the Junior Carlton on the Sunday after to meet some friends, an invitation I was delighted to accept. Among the guests was Louis Jennings, greatly pleased at the result of his friendly offices. The date of the dinner was Sunday, 31st March, 1890. On the following Tuesday happened the event recorded in connection with the Parnell Commission. Passing through the Lobby, having announced his intention of not moving the amendment, Jennings said to me, in tones whose bitterness testified to his hurt, "It's an odd thing. Randolph has just as many friends to-day as he had a week ago. He has regained you and he has lost me."

The rupture was final. Lord Randolph made several attempts to recapture his old friend. They were sternly, stubbornly ignored. Three years later, Jennings, one of the truest-hearted men that ever breathed, died, not having in the meanwhile broken the pained silence that brooded over the blighted friendship.

In 1890, the Government being in a parlous state,

there seemed prospect of Lord Randolph's being called to its assistance. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, probably not altogether easy in mind recollecting the part played by him in the matter of Mr. Chamberlain's repulse of Lord Randolph in his candidature for Birmingham, personally urged Lord Salisbury to recall the strayed reveller. The Premier, small blame to him, had had enough of the company in the Cabinet of his intractable young friend. Perish the Government rather than resuscitate Lord Randolph. Accepting what he regarded as the close of his political career, Lord Randolph set out for South Africa in search of gold and big game. The former he found; the latter, in the person of a lion, nearly found him. He came back early in 1892 improved in health, his interest in politics quickened by the circumstance that the Unionist Party was now in Opposition. At Mr. Balfour's request he seated himself among his old colleagues on the Front Opposition Bench.

Thence he rose to take part in the debate on the second reading of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. The appearance of the House testified to the deathless interest he commanded. Every bench was filled, a crowd of members, unable to find seats, thronging the Bar. But the stars in their course fought against Sisera. It was arranged that Lord Randolph should resume the debate immediately after Questions. Had that been possible all might have been well. But someone raised a question of privilege, which wrangled on for a full hour, through which Lord Randolph sat fuming. He had at the proper moment taken some drug designed to "buck up" his frail body through the hour he intended to speak. When the hour had sped the tonic effects of his medicine were exhausted, and it was a decrepit man

with bowed figure and occasionally inarticulate voice that at length stood at the table.

It was a painful spectacle, from contemplation of which Members gradually withdrew. The Chamber, which once filled at the signal "Churchill is up," was almost empty when he sat down. Yet Mr. Bryce, who sat attentive on the Treasury Bench opposite, and heard every word of the speech painfully read from MS., told me it was a cogent argument, admirably phrased, illumined by happy illustration, in these respects falling nothing short of earlier successes.

Lord Randolph was an habitual diner-out, even more enjoying opportunities of giving dinners. At the end of the Session of 1880, when the Fourth Party had succeeded in making themselves an organised power in the House, they, gravely mimicking the then prevalent custom of Ministers, dined together at Greenwich. They invited a single guest—Mr. Labouchere. Lord Randolph was rather a trial to hostesses, none being quite sure in what mood her festival might find him. It came to pass in time that he acquired the habit of Royalty, commanding that the list of guests should be submitted to him before he replied to an invitation. The first time I met him at table, precursor of many delightful foregatherings, was at a farewell dinner Colonel Fred Burnaby gave on the eve of my departure on a journey round the world. Burnaby told me that, showing Lord Randolph the list of guests, he asked him whom he would have as companions. He named Frank Burnand, then editor of *Punch*, and one of his colleagues. And a very jolly night we spent.

I was several times privileged to form one of a quartette driving in a four-wheeler from the House to

dine at Connaught Place. On such occasions Lord Randolph, Drummond Wolff, and John Gorst, were like boys just let out of school, not only speaking disrespectfully of their pastors and masters, but ruthlessly chaffing each other. I never met Mr. Balfour at these symposia. Lord Randolph frequently gave little Sunday-night dinners at the Turf Club, where one occasionally had the felicity of meeting those renowned Irish wits, Dr. Nedley and Father Healy.

The dinner-party alluded to on an earlier page, the last time Lord Randolph and Louis Jennings sat at the same table, was memorable in other ways. The invitation was "to meet H.R.H. the Prince of Wales," now King Edward VII. The fact leaking out that among the company was Dick Power, the popular Whip of the Irish Nationalist Party, complaint was sounded in Unionist circles that Randolph was plotting to bring H.R.H. and the official Home Rulers together. What the host chiefly had at heart was to draw round his Royal guest a cheery company, an effort in which he was successful. Of other persons present I remember Sir William Harcourt, seated on the host's right; Lord Morris on the Prince's left; on other chairs, Frank Lockwood, Louis Jennings, and Mr. George Lewis, not at that time knighted.

The last time I dined with Lord Randolph was on what proved to be his final appearance in the character of Amphitryon. Contemplating a journey round the world, he bade to his mother's home in Grosvenor Square a score of old friends, whose names testify to the wideness of his range of personal sympathy. On his left hand sat Mr. Arthur Balfour, in old Fourth Party days a private under his command, now his successor in the Leadership of the House of Commons; on

his right was Mr. Henry Chaplin, from whom in the early eighties his vagaries had compelled grave reproof. Round the table sat Mr. David Plunket, now Lord Rathmore; Mr. Rochefort Maguire, Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Edward Dicey, Mr. George Lewis, Sir Henry Calcraft, of the Board of Trade; Sir Edward Hamilton, sometime Mr. Gladstone's private secretary; Sir Edward Lawson, now Lord Burnham, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Sir Algernon Borthwick (Lord Glenesk), Mr. John Morley, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the dramatist, and Sir Francis Knollys, secretary to the Prince of Wales. Lord Randolph told me he had asked three others, whose presence would have further diversified this notable gathering. They were Sir William Harcourt, detained at home by a dinner engagement; Mr. Asquith, on Home Secretary's duty at White Lodge in anticipation of the birth of an heir to the Duke of York; and Henry Irving, engaged on theatrical duties.

The host was not in talkative mood, but kept a watchful eye on the comfort of his guests. One noticed how nervously his hand beat on the table as he gazed around. After dinner he talked with eager interest of his coming journey. Two prospects that chiefly attracted him were the shooting of big game in India, and the opportunity of visiting Burmah—"Burmah which I annexed," he proudly said. As on his visit to South Africa he sent letters to a London paper, he had now accepted a commission from a Paris journal to write descriptions of his tour, intending to fill them chiefly with his shooting expeditions. But he did not reach India: and Burmah never looked on the face of the statesman who, in his brief tenure of the India Office, added the glow of its rubies to the splendour of the English crown.

The dinner took place at 50, Grosvenor Square, on

the 23rd June, 1894. At Christmas time—a memorable epoch in his life—Lord Randolph was hurried home and carried a mere wreck into his mother's house, where he died early in the morning of the 24th January, 1895. He was in his forty-sixth year, the very prime of life as others count it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DRAMA AT WESTMINSTER.

PRELUDE.—The Theatres Royal.

Though the Palace at Westminster is not licensed for theatrical performances, it is upon occasions a successful rival of other houses that are. The House of Commons has its stage, upon which strut the most famous actors of the age. It has its stars of varying degree, its supers exceed in number even those that used to crowd the stage of the Lyceum in the palmy days of Sir Henry Irving. It has its curtain that rises punctually at ten minutes to three and, with rarely ordered exceptions, falls with even happier regularity at eleven o'clock. Contrary to the wholesome commercial principle of other theatres, admission of the public is gained through the agency of orders. The galleries over the clock are all paper—a circumstance that would make the average manager sick at heart. The historic stage has been trodden by a galaxy of commanding genius that have in turn filled the world in amazement. Amid names starred on the bill have been those of Pitt, Fox, Canning, Peel, Palmerston, Disraeli, Bright, Gladstone.

Of the two Houses, jointly running but under distinct management, the Commons is naturally the more popular. But when with due preparation the Lords stage a big piece it need not fear the rivalry of its neighbour. For scenic effect the House of Lords, with its gilt and colour, is the better fitted. The House of Commons, as

befits its mission and its history, is studiously plain. Utility has in no respect been sacrificed to ornamentation. Stern enactment of this principle has created a radical distinction between the two Chambers. In the Commons any man may be heard without raising his voice above conversational pitch. Out of a full muster of peers there are not a score whose speech is throughout audible to strained attention.

The difference is due to a fact of which few Members are aware and still fewer strangers seated in the gallery suspect. When the new House of Commons was opened for business Members found themselves seated in a vaulted Chamber of perfect proportion, singular beauty. A drawback to perfect content was that they could not hear speeches addressed to the Chair. The voice of the orator floating upwards rumbled itself out amid the elaborately carved beams and fretted woodwork of the ceiling. It was magnificent but it wasn't business. Various experiments for remedying the defect were tried. None proved effective. At length, in despair it was resolved to sacrifice the ceiling. There was flung across it the glass casing which, by lowering the height of the Chamber makes acoustical properties perfect whilst by the installation of gas burners it supplies illumination and assists in carrying out the ventilation. To-day the House of Commons is among all the Legislative Assemblies of the world the one most perfectly adapted for the business of making speeches. The House of Lords remains one of the worst. It has retained its original roof with its carved supports. But it is a sepulchre of speech.

Happily it is the men whose words the world would not willingly let die who, by curious chance, are able to make themselves heard in the House of Lords.

When Disraeli went thither there was much curiosity to learn how he would fare in this respect. He had not been on his legs five minutes before anxiety was dispelled. The sonorous voice that had for forty years commanded attention in the Commons was equal to the acoustical disadvantages of the Lords. The late Lord Granville by taking pains was heard throughout his polished speech. In later life the Marquis of Salisbury, a wearied Titan, acquired the habit of sinking his chin on his breast and confiding to his bosom the closing words of his more important sentences. When more attentive to the exigencies of the situation, he could make himself heard throughout the Chamber. The Marquis of Ripon is the despair of the Press Gallery. His predecessor, Lord Lansdowne, now Leader of the Opposition, is as audible as his speech is lucid. Lord Rosebery fills the Chamber not only with an audience but with his voice.

On big nights, such as are appointed for discussion of a crucial foreign question or a stage of a controversial measure like the Home Rule Bill or the Education Bill, the House of Lords presents a brilliant spectacle. It has the advantage over its humbler companion of the visible presence of ladies. In the Commons lady visitors are shut in behind an iron *grille* as if they were the wives of Mohammedans. In the Lords peeresses and their daughters garland the long galleries that flank the Chamber. On nights of exceptional interest they clamber into the turreted gallery over the Throne. The comparatively spacious galleries allotted to strangers are thronged by visitors who, if they cannot hear, may see. Members of the House of Commons fill the pens allotted to them over the Bar. In the Diplomatic Gallery glitter the Orders of Foreign Ministers. The

railed space before the Throne, level with the stage, is peopled by Privy Councillors generally including the principal Ministers and ex-Ministers from the other House. Over long spaces the debate usually rises to the height of the occasion. In the Commons all Members have equal claim to catch the Speaker's eye. The Chair varies its favour of selection, sometimes with the effect of breaking the intense interest of debate by the sequence of a bore.

In big debate in the Lords the individuality and succession of contributors is settled after prolonged conference between the Whips on either side. Acting in his dual capacity as Speaker of the House of Lords, the Lord Chancellor does not possess the privilege of his colleague in the other House of calling upon Members to debate. On ordinary occasions noble lords rise when the spirit moves them. If two are on their legs together and neither will give way, motion is made that Lord So-and-So be heard. If objection be taken the House divides, just as if the matter at issue were the second reading of an important Bill. On field nights, as I have said, the order of debate is fixed in advance on the highest level of individual authority or debating prowess. There is no appeal against the decision. Of course any peer objecting might claim a division. But he knows better.

Scene I.—First Nights.

Up to the commencement of the reign of Queen Victoria it was the practice for the Sovereign not only to open Parliament in person but frequently to go down to prorogue it. Whilst the Prince Consort was yet

alive the Queen commonly lent to the opening day of recurrent Sessions the grace and dignity of her presence. Following on her great bereavement the habit of abstention from public ceremonial extended to Parliamentary proceedings. Disraeli, having won his way to the Premiership, the Queen honoured him by personally associating herself with the Parliament that returned him to power. Thrice during his Premiership Her Majesty appeared in state at Westminster.

In contemporary record it is stated that on Queen Victoria's first appearance on the Parliamentary scene —she prorogued the Parliament in Session at the time of William IV.—she read her Speech "in a low, sweet clear voice, heard all over the House." In later times the Queen's voice was not heard. The Speech was in charge of the Lord Chancellor who, when Her Majesty was seated on the Throne, and the Commons summoned by Black Rod had ranged themselves at the Bar advanced and on bended knee proffered the document. By a gesture of the hand the Queen bade him read it. Thus it came to pass that Queen Victoria opened Parliament without opening her mouth.

King Edward has revived the old custom of reading his Speech from the Throne. Another alteration connected therewith indicates His Majesty's zeal in all that relates to the functions of the Sovereign. Formerly it was the custom for a *communiqué* to be forwarded to the editors of London morning papers setting forth the heads of the Speech as read at the Ministerial and ex-Ministerial dinners that take place the night before a new Session opens. As soon as King Edward came to the throne he put an end to the practice. The purport of the King's Speech, he insisted, should be made known for the first time when the Sovereign

personally communicates it to noble lords and honourable gentlemen bidden for that purpose to the House of Lords.

The whole business of opening a new Session does not, as far as the Sovereign is concerned, occupy more than fifteen minutes. The spectacle is worthy the occasion and the setting. For once in the course of the year peers wear their robes, flooding the floor of the House with a mass of colour. It is diversified by the uniforms and Orders of the Foreign Ambassadors for whom accommodation is provided on the benches to the right of the Woolsack, where in ordinary times the Bishops flock. Here are seen the Turkish Minister in his fez, the only man in the company remaining covered in presence of the Sovereign; the Japanese and Persian Ministers in their gay uniform; the members of the Chinese Legation in round high caps and petticoats, looking as if they had just stepped off the panel of a tea chest. Here are the emissaries of Continental Powers, their breasts ablaze with Orders. Here, before Greece found she could not afford the luxury of a plenipotentiary at the Court of St. James, gleamed the Greek Minister in tight white breeches and petticoat of cloth of gold. And here, conspicuous by his plain morning dress, was found the American Minister.

To the picturesqueness of the scene His Majesty's judges lend their sage countenances, their full-bottomed wigs, their ermine gowns. Places are allotted to them on benches immediately before the Woolsack, where they sit among the surpliced Bishops. On this rare occasion women have their rights. A considerable proportion of the benches on the floor of the House is reserved for the peeresses, whilst other ladies garland the long length of the side galleries. The

coming of the Prince and Princess of Wales precedes the arrival of the King. H. R. H. wears the robes of a peer with no difference save that the quaint garment is tied at the throat with a white silk ribbon. The Princess is conducted to the Woolsack, where she sits with her back to the thronged House, her face to the Throne. Meanwhile, the Prince of Wales has taken his seat in the chair set for him to the right of the Throne. As their Royal Highnesses enter a swift soft rustling sound fills the Chamber. It is the peeresses who, hitherto seated with opera cloaks covering their shoulders, begin with one accord to throw them off, revealing a flashing light of countless costly jewels.

When, on July 17th, 1837, Queen Victoria for the first time seated herself on the Throne, she was, we read, dressed in white satin robe, decorated with jewels, the garter on her breast, a mantle of crimson velvet over her shoulders. In 1876, present again, after long interval, at the opening of Parliament, the white satin frock of girlhood days had given place to a robe of imperial purple, so dark in hue that to the strangers in the crowded gallery facing the Throne it seemed to be unrelieved mourning. On her head surmounting the white pointed lace cap familiar in many of her portraits of the date was set a miniature crown of diamonds. Round her throat was strung a magnificent necklace of the same precious stones. On her breast the Koh-i-noor flashed like a comet. The jewel of the Order of the Garter glistened on the broad band of blue ribbon that crossed her shoulder. These were unwonted splendours of array, assumed in honour of the state occasion. Contrasting with them, possibly more to the widowed Queen's taste, were the simple black fan she carried and the black glove that covered hand and wrist.

Queen Victoria, going to open Parliament, drove through the crowded streets in semi-state. King Edward had dragged from the seclusion in which it had long remained the historic glass coach, an indispensable portion of Royal procession in full state. Seated therein, the Queen at his side, in full view of the cheering multitude, he proceeded at slow pace through long lanes of densely packed cheering humanity. The Chamber of the House of Lords barely suffices to find places for Peers, Peeresses, and Foreign Ministers. Accommodation is increased by the introduction of temporary benches placed at right angles with those on which during business hours peers sit. On the other hand the King being seated on the Throne, the ordinary railed-in space in which it is set, available in ordinary times for Privy Councillors, is kept clear for the High Officers of State, such as the Sword Bearer and the Carrier of the Cap of Maintenance. Provision is made for a privileged number of the public to assemble in the long corridors within the Palace of Westminster, along which the Royal Procession passes on its way to the Throne.

When the King is seated, Black Rod is despatched to summon the faithful Commons to hear the Speech read. The limited space allotted to them at the Bar is ludicrously inadequate to the number desiring to be present and determined to fulfil their desire. In 1876 the novelty of Queen Victoria's appearance on the scene creating exceptional interest, there was something approaching a riot. In obedience to command from the Sovereign, conveyed by Black Rod, the Speaker steps down from the Chair, and with stately step marches forth. Behind him comes the Serjeant-at-Arms shouldering the Mace. Then follow the Leader

of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the principal Ministers and Ex-Ministers. In the rear is a surging mass of private Members.

In this year Disraeli, as Premier, led the procession of Members. All went well till the central hall was passed, there remaining the last lap of the corridor leading to the House of Lords. Here the mob behind broke bounds. Forging ahead they almost swept the frail Premier off his feet, carrying the Speaker and the Serjeant-at-Arms up to the Bar of the House of Lords as on the crest of an angry wave. Some Members were seriously hurt in the fray. It was said later that Dizzy straightway made up his mind never again to peril his precious life by repeating the journey. That, of course, was Smoking-room humour. As a matter of historic fact, before the Queen opened the next Session in person he had assumed the dignity of Earl of Beaconsfield, and from comfortable quarters at the right hand of his Sovereign had the satisfaction of witnessing renewal of the ugly rush of his old colleagues in the Commons.

In order to avoid repetition of an equally disorderly scene when King Edward opened his first Parliament, arrangements were made for balloting for places. In the Speaker's procession and at the Bar of the Lords, the number being limited to the space available, all went well. But the vast majority of Commoners were left out in the cold.

In the matter of ordinary attire "First Nighters" in the House of Commons, following the trend of fashion outside, are much less punctiliously dressed than were their fathers and grandfathers when Queen Victoria opened the first Session of her earliest Parliament. At that time there still lingered the decorous fashion of the

high coat collar, the stock carried up to the chin, the trousers cut tight to the leg and drawn over the boot by a strap. I have a precious print which shows the House of Commons in the Session of 1821. The Members are seated in the old House, dimly lighted by candelabra pendant from the roof. It is the most appallingly respectable assembly I ever set eyes upon.

I one day showed the print to Frank Lockwood, at the time Solicitor-General, all unconscious of the cruel cutting off that lay in wait for him midway in a brilliant career. "How decorously dull!" he exclaimed, regarding the scene with quick interest. "How monotonously respectable! There does not seem to be a single Irish Member among them."

One peculiarity marks the radical change wrought in the British face in connection with the razor. In the unreformed Parliament Members were, for the most part, clean shaven. The only variation permitted was a little strip of whisker coming down the side of either cheek to the level of the nostril. In the 1874 Parliament, of which Mr. Sargent (not the R.A.) made a successful picture in its second Session, there appear on the crowded benches only two bare faces. One is that of Mr. Fawcett, seated in his once familiar place on the Front Bench by the Serjeant-at-Arms' chair. The other is Mr. Hanbury. For the rest, Members of the Parliament which first saw Disraeli in power as well as in office are both whiskered and moustached.

Recalling the appearance of the present House on a crowded night, one notes the further change of fashion established in the more than thirty years that separate it from the General Election of 1874. More Members than ever sport the moustache, while many, especially those advancing in years, dispense with whiskers, which

have a tendency to invest even the young with a middle-aged appearance.

Up to the 1874 Parliament, in which many things were changed, the use of the tall hat while in attendance on the House was imperative. A Member had fair range of liberty in respect of dress generally but he must sport a "topper." Joseph Cowen was the first man who brought the billycock hat within the sacred precincts of Westminster. But he did not flout it in the face of the Speaker. He cautiously removed it before entering the House, secreting it about his person till he withdrew. An Irish Member, John Martin, was the second adventurer on this pathway. He, one night being seated in his place, disturbed the brazen composure of the Mace by covering his head with an uncompromising stiff "bowler." It was understood at the time that the Speaker privately communicated with him, gently but firmly remonstrating against the breach of decorum. However it be, Mr. Martin, though he stuck to his hat, never again wore it in the House.

Mr. Broadhurst, whilst he held office under the Crown, happily compromised the difficulty. Unaccustomed to a top hat except on Sundays, occasions of christenings, and the like, he could not bring himself to wear one on daily repairing to Westminster. Whilst still with us he accordingly kept a fine silk hat in his locker. Arriving at the House, crowned with the meek dignity of a billycock, he went straight to his locker and changed his headgear, returning his top hat to its resting-place when he answered to the cry, "Who goes home?"

At this day such elaborate observance seems almost pedantic. Bowlers and billycocks, hard and soft, are

common objects in a crowded House. Worse still, straw hats have been worn under the eyes of the Speaker. Easy is the descent of Avernus. Shortly after the first straw hat glistened under the gas-lit roof of the House of Commons cummerbunds set in, and legislators, unrestrained by waistcoats, wrestled with the gravest political problems of the day.

Scene II.—Humour on the Stage.

The House of Commons was perhaps the only thing in the world Lord Macaulay admitted he did not understand. Writing about it more than sixty years ago, he said: "The House of Commons is a place in which I would not promise success to any man. I have great doubts even about Jeffrey. It is the most peculiar audience in the world. I should say that a man's being a good writer, a good orator at the bar, a good mob-orator, or a good orator in debating clubs, was rather a reason for expecting him to fail, than for expecting him to succeed in the House of Commons. A place where Walpole succeeded and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded and Burke failed; where Peel now succeeds, and where Mackintosh fails; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner-bells, where Lawrence and Jekyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so, of their time, were thought bores, is surely a very strange place."

A series of Reform Bills and much else has happened in the House of Commons since Macaulay took his seat in it as a Member for Calne. But this description of a peculiarity among legislative Assemblies, a unique characteristic, is as accurate to-day as it was when, in February, 1831, Macaulay wrote to his friend Whewell.

Difficulty of access to the good-will of the House is the more remarkable since, paradoxical as it may appear, it is the most indulgent of audiences. It is even abjectly eager to be pleased. It will laugh heartily at the feeblest joke, whilst the upsetting of a glass of water or an ink-pot by an impassioned or embarrassed orator, the inadvertent breach of order involved in a member passing between the vision of the Speaker and the gentleman addressing the Chair, is the signal for uproarious mirth or gravely affected indignation.

As for the man who echoes the sonorous utterances of his peroration by sitting down on his hat, he instantly becomes the prime favourite of the day, though he may find a dangerous rival in another member who, with sweeping gesture, brings his clenched fist down on the hat of an unsuspecting listener on the bench below.

Nowhere are Rosaline's words to Biron truer than in the House of Commons:

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it.

Some members, offering the most commonplace observation, or interposing with the baldest question, are greeted with tribute of hilarious laughter, whilst others, making a really passable joke, are horribly conscious of having cast a gloom over the company.

By comparison with predecessors, the House of Commons elected in January, 1906, is decidedly the least merry of any known to the present generation. One almost sufficient reason for this is the altered circumstances under which the Irish Party now exist.

It was during the Parliament elected in 1874, which placed Mr. Disraeli in power, and incidentally saw the birth of the Home Rule Party, that fun at Westminster

raged fast and furious. Recalling some of the figures in the motley following of Mr. Butt, I find no parallel in the *personnel* of the House to-day.

There was Major O'Gorman, for example, a personage who seems impossible in the present prosaic Parliament. The mere appearance of the major was exceedingly striking, lending indescribable comicality to the part he played. Considerably over six feet high, stout to boot, he was more like a mountain than a man.

All sorts of stories were told about him. One was to the effect that the moment he emerged on Palace Yard, just before the House rose, there was a wild stampede of the four-wheeled cabs. The hansoms were safe, for the major could not with whatsoever manœuvring screw himself into one. He could just manage to get into a four-wheeler. It was a serious undertaking for a one-horsed shay to get him up the hill as far as the Hotel Metropole, where he sojourned. So cabby fled lest he should be called upon.

Among the legends lingering around his name was one setting forth how, on the door of the cab being one night opened on arrival by the hotel porter, the major was found standing upright, breathless. The bottom of the conveyance had fallen through under his weight, and in order to save his life, he had to trot along at the same pace or rate of progress as the horse, fortunately not too rapid.

Another story is quite true, as I can personally testify. When Doctor Kenealy, being returned to Parliament by the electors of Stoke, took an early opportunity of moving a vote of censure on the judges, he found a teller in Mr. Whalley. On the House dividing, it was found that four hundred and thirty-three men of all parties voted in the negative, Doctor

Kenealy's proposition being supported by a single member. The major was the minority. Asked afterward why he had gone against his own party, for once merged in the majority, the major, mopping his massive brow, answered, "Bedad, it's a hot night, and I knew there would be more room in the 'Aye' Lobby."

It would be difficult to quote from any of the major's speeches in hope that the passages would account to the cold-blooded reader for the uncontrollable mirth into which he threw the House whenever, under whatever circumstances, he addressed it. I have seen Gladstone rolling about on his seat with laughter when the major was holding forth; Disraeli sitting opposite with the painfully puckered up face that in latter days served him as a smile.

It was only Ireland that, in one Session of Parliament, could contribute to the same assembly Mr. Joseph Gillis Biggar and the major. In later years Mr. Biggar began to assume a grave, statesmanlike air, to abjure his imitation seakkin waistcoat, and to regard the Speaker with deference. On his first appearance in the House he and the major were inseparable, allies drawn together by allurement of the common instinct of "goin' agin the Government."

Sometimes in the obstructive divisions, the Speaker permitted himself the joke of naming the major and Mr. Biggar as tellers. Mr. Biggar was a little humpbacked man, and to see him skipping up the House with the gigantic major rolling astern, like a line-of-battle ship in the trough of the Atlantic, was a delight that never palled on the appetite of the House.

Mr. Biggar's waistcoat was a prominent feature in a night's proceedings. Whips and Ministers in charge of Bills, anxious for the progress of business, carefully

studied the attire of the Member for Cavan, when with curious outspread gesture of his hand, as if he were hailing a 'bus, he tried to catch the Speaker's eye.

If his coat were allowed to fall in ordinary fashion over the waistcoat, things were moderately well. If it were thrown back and a wide expanse of yellow stuff visible, things were queer. The equivalent to hoisting the South Cone was found when Mr. Biggar addressed the House with his coat recklessly thrown back, a thumb in each armhole, exposing the whole breadth of the waistcoat.

It was after such a demonstration that on a historic occasion the twinkling eyes of Mr. Biggar happening to be turned upon the Strangers' Gallery, and recognising there the Prince of Wales, he remarked, "Mr. Speaker, sir, I spy strangers." Whereupon, in accordance with the rule then unrepealed, there was nothing for the Speaker to do but to order the galleries to be cleared, and nothing for the Heir Apparent to the throne to do, but more or less humbly walk out with the other strangers.

The House of Commons is a dignified legislative assembly, but now as in Sir Charles Wetherell's time it dearly loves personalities. Mr. Bright's likening of Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe to the Skye terrier of whom it was hard to say which was the head and which the tail, is a perfect specimen of the quip and crank that gives it enduring pleasure. But a man must have attained a certain position before he is permitted to indulge in license of that kind.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson was for a generation the accepted, not to say the professional, humorist of the House.

There was no pretence about his flashes of wit and humour. They were all made at home and brought

down, without effort of concealment, plainly set forth on slips of paper. But they were very good, and were introduced with admirable effect.

Sir Wilfrid was a great story teller.

One narrative told with gusto related to a well known Member for an English county, who, touring in the west of Ireland, found himself in the train with two priests. He gathered from them that they lived at Kilkee, in County Clare, a rift in the embattled coast on which the Atlantic beats in sublimest beauty. The priests complained that it was very dull living there.

"Ah," said the M.P., thinking of the Atlantic in its many moods, "but you must have a beautiful view."

"Sorra a bit," replied one of the priests, testily. "There's nothing at all between us and Ameriky."

Another of his stories was somewhat gruesome.

Two visitors at Nice, cutting short their stay by dying, were committed to the charge of the same undertaker. One was a lady from London, the other a general high in command in the Russian Army. The bodies, duly coffined, were dispatched to their destinations, one to London the other to St. Petersburg. On the arrival of the former the bereaved relatives opening the coffin in order to obtain a last view of the lamented aunt were amazed at the discovery of a general in full uniform.

They telegraphed to the undertaker at Nice, who, with many apologies for the mistake, sent them the name and address of the general's friends in St. Petersburg. They communicated full particulars without loss of time, and received the following reply:

"Your aunt was buried to-day with full military honours. Dispose of the general as you see fit."

One story illustrates his gift of personal banter, much

appreciated on dull days. There was a Member of the House, Thomas Collins by name, who, though wealthy, was careful about many things, especially odd sixpences. Some days elapsed before he appeared at the table to be sworn in after his election.

"Odd, isn't it," somebody said to Sir Wilfrid, "that Tom Collins doesn't turn up?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Sir Wilfrid. "He's waiting for an excursion train!"

One narrative Sir Wilfrid kept for private circulation, which is a pity, for it would have hugely delighted the House. Being on a visit to a friend, the rigid apostle of temperance made the acquaintance of a sharp young lady of some seven summers, with whom he held lively conversation. At the close he said to her:

"Now, my dear, we have been talking some time. I'm sure you've no idea who I am."

"Oh, yes, I have," miss replied. "You are the celebrated drunkard!"

Another story told with inimitable gravity was garnered from the stock of a Member of the House of Commons, who, in his magisterial capacity, periodically visited a private lunatic asylum. Among the patients was a gentleman who had occasional lapses into sanity. At these times he was able to converse in such fashion that a casual interlocutor would never suspect his normal condition. Like the majority of the inmates he was fully convinced that, as he put it, he was "as sane as the Lord Chancellor."

One day an old friend of some position in the legal world called to pay a visit. The opportunity was seized by the inmate to enlarge on the injustice done him, and to make the most of the opportunity of engaging a powerful advocate out of doors. He talked for half an

hour without the slightest indication that he was other than what he looked—a well informed, healthy-minded gentleman. He made a great impression on his visitor, who warmly assured him that he would have further investigation made into his case.

On leaving, the grateful patient courteously conducted his morning caller to the front door affectionately pressing his hand at parting.

"You won't forget what I have told you," he pleaded, with tears in his voice.

"No," responded the visitor turning round to descend the rather long flight of steps.

"I don't think you will," said the patient dreamily, "but, lest you should, you know ——"

And lifting up his foot he gave the unsuspecting, defenceless, visitor a kick behind that sent him spinning down the stairway, sprawling on the gravel.

Scene III.—Irish Comedians.

The dull respectability of the present House of Commons is a condition of things largely due to the change in the *personnel* of the Irish members. After the election of 1874 they flooded Westminster with rich and rare individuality of the kind hitherto familiar to the Saxon chiefly in the novels of Lever and Lover. This type has disappeared from the present House. Perhaps the only Irish Member who to-day habitually rises into flights of humour is Tim Healy.

Among those who delighted the Parliament of 1874-80 was Mr. Delahunty, Member for Waterford City. His panacea for all the woes of Ireland had something to do with one-pound notes. I am ashamed to say, though I

have often heard him discourse on the topic, there does not dwell in my mind a clear impression as to whether he desired to have one-pound notes authorised or whether he would have had them abolished. However that be, the peace and prosperity of Ireland were, according to his view, wrapped up in the one-pound note.

One Wednesday afternoon, in the Session of 1878, the fortune of the ballot gave Mr. Delahunty an opportunity of dealing with this burning question. He had brought with him a small black bag, in which, according to the testimony of his compatriots, he had been accustomed to store the depositions taken before him as Coroner of the City and County of Waterford. Now, it was primarily requisitioned for holding the convincing notes of his oration. It is presumable that he had promised himself when his task was completed, a few hours relaxation in one of the inner circles of London Society. In view of this arrangement of his evening he had, after filling his bag up to the top with manuscript notes, found just room enough to put in a comb, brush, and a few other toilet necessaries. Hauling out a handful of papers from the bag, and finding them not exactly what he wanted, he turned around and, amid an awful silence, deliberately resumed the search. Of course, the first things that came to hand were the comb and brush.

Hastily thrusting them back among the documents he made another start with his speech. The fresh batch of papers also led to nowhere in particular. Coming to a break in his argument he turned once more to the bag, fearfully conscious of the presence of the comb and brush. With increased deliberation he rooted round, and finally, under the impression that he had at last seized the papers he sought, he produced a pair of gray

worsted stockings. These approached the Irish question from a quite unexpected avenue. The House roared with laughter. Mr. Delahunty, still failing in his endeavour to come across the missing note, took the miscellaneous articles out of the bag, spread them on the bench, and with his back turned to the Speaker, prosecuted his search. When at last he found the desired sheet of paper he went on as if nothing had happened, the House listening with high good humour to a story that had neither beginning, middle, nor end, through which the comb and brush came and went, as Harlequin and Columbine purposely flit across the stage in the intervals of pantomime business.

Among other oddities who occur to the memory, emerging out of the now distant past, was Mr. Tom Connelly, who sat on the Conservative Benches and stirred up his compatriots on the opposite side with the long pole of scornful insinuation or vitriolic vituperation. There was Mr. McCarthy Downing, faithful to the last to his old leader, Isaac Butt, growing nearer and nearer in facial resemblance to a plucked jackdaw, as Butt's fortunes faded and he found himself thrust aside by the more strenuous Parnell. There was Mr. Ronayne, one of the wittiest of Irishmen. There was Frank Hugh O'Donnell, with his pleasing habit of presenting himself after a big debate had been closed by the leaders on both sides, and insisting on continuing it indefinitely. There was Dr. O'Leary, a magniloquent monocule. There was Captain Stackpool, with his hands in his pockets and his reminiscences of Lord Palmerston. "Ah," he was accustomed to say sadly, shaking his head at recurrent difficulties, "things wouldn't be like this if old Pam were here!"

Another type of the now extinct Irish Member was

The O'Gorman Mahon. He was, when he came back to the House, returned for County Clare in 1879, one of the few living Members who had sat in the unreformed Parliament. He was Member from 1847 to 1852, returning to the old scene after an interval of twenty-seven years. Meanwhile he had seen fighting both by land and sea. On one occasion, offended by a Conservative Member opposite whom he suspected of "sniggering" at an Irish Nationalist Member on his feet at the moment, The O'Gorman Mahon crossed the floor, handed his "cyard" to the offender, and went into the Lobby ready to complete the preliminaries of a challenge.

So recently as 1884 Sir Patrick O'Brien, another richly endowed Irish Member, went even further than that in the arrangements for a duel. In debate on a local Dublin Bill Sir Pat, it being two o'clock in the morning, got a little mixed as to whether it was Mr. Wm. O'Brien or Mr. Harrington, who had interrupted his observations with what he described as "a guffaw." At first he leaned towards conviction that it was Mr. Harrington, of whom he incidentally remarked that "the honourable Member was carrying parcels for a wage of three-and-sixpence a week when I represented King's County in Parliament."

After staring with blood-shot eyes for some time at the little band of Parnellites opposite, Sir Pat accidentally got Mr. William O'Brien in focus, and convinced himself that it was he who was the offender. Several times, leaning forward, putting his hand to his mouth, he inquired across the House, in a stage whisper, whether Mr. O'Brien was "afraid?" No notice being taken, Sir Pat hurriedly left the House, looked up The O'Gorman Mahon, engaged him as a second, and, returning, informed Mr. O'Brien that everything was

settled. All he had to do was to put his man in communication with the ancient warrior. Sir Pat waited in the Lobby for an hour. Mr. O'Brien made no sign, and in the cooler atmosphere of the following day the bloodthirsty enterprise was abandoned.

There was in those days a serious-mannered Irish Member named Blake, who is remembered for a brief correspondence he read to the delighted House. It was introduced in a speech delivered in debate on the Irish Sunday Closing Bill. Mr. Blake had, he confidentially informed the House, an uncle who regularly took six tumblers of whisky toddy daily. This troubled him, and after much thought he resolved to write and remonstrate with his relative. The following was the letter:

"My dear Uncle: I write to say how pleased I should be if you could see your way to giving up your six glasses of whisky a day. I am sure you would find many advantages in doing so, the greatest of which would be that, as I am persuaded, it would be the means of lengthening your days."

The Uncle replied:

"My dear Nephew: I am much obliged to you for your dutiful letter. I was so much struck by what you said, and, in particular, by your kind wish to lengthen my days, that last Friday I gave up the whisky. I believe you are right, my boy, as to my days being lengthened, for, bedad! it was the longest day I ever remember."

Another hero of coercion days, now forgotten by the multitude, was Mr. Pyne, Member for West Waterford. In the winter of 1887 a warrant for his arrest was issued under the Crimes Act. Mr. Pyne, who farmed a large property in Waterford belonging to the Duke of Devonshire, shut himself up in his Irish

home, Lisfarney Castle. He had the trenches filled with water, the drawbridge up, took in supplies by a window in the battlements and thus lived for months, occasionally indulging in friendly conversation with the police wandering about below with the warrant for his arrest in their pockets. He came to town for the opening of the Session of 1888 and was arrested as he passed down the steps at Westminster Bridge to enter Palace Yard.

The originality of his mind was further indicated upon his watch. On its dial he had roughly engraved the legend: "Pay no rent." Whenever in troubled times any of his neighbours came to him for advice as to what they should do in presence of a demand for rent, Mr. Pyne solemnly shook his head. "I cannot," he said, "express my views on the subject, for Mr. Balfour says they are illegal. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll show you what time of day it is," and, holding out his watch, the perturbed tenant read upon it the admonitory legend, "Pay no rent."

This was the comic side of Mr. Pyne's Parliamentary and political career. Tragedy swooped down just two years after his arrest in Palace Yard. Sailing from Holyhead on a return visit to Ireland, the Member for Waterford was nowhere to be found when the vessel reached Kingstown. In the darkness of the night he had fallen or been swept overboard, and like ships posted up at Lloyds, has never since been heard of.

Scene IV.—"Privilege!"

There is nothing the House of Commons guards with more jealous care than its ancient privileges. It is sad

project was so chilling that he dropped it in that form, carrying it out in another. He brought an action for libel against the *World*, but was not any more successful. Lord Coleridge, recently appointed Lord Chief Justice, before whom the case came on a preliminary issue, ruled that there was no libel in the articles, and Charles Lewis subsided.

But the opportunity of coming well to the front in charge of a Breach of Privilege case was irresistible for the Member for Londonderry. In this same Session of 1875 a Select Committee was sitting to investigate the question of Foreign Loans, then much to the front in connection with the late Baron Grant and other enterprising financiers. The *Times* and the *Daily News* in the ordinary accustomed course of business daily printed reports of the proceedings. Select Committees being an integral part of the House itself, that was clearly a Breach of Privilege. Relying on the fusty Standing Order, Charles Lewis was not this time to be baulked. Citing the reports, he moved that the printers of the papers be brought to the Bar of the House. Disraeli, then Premier, was at pains to dissuade his nominal follower. It would have been easier to induce a hungry dog to give up a toothsome bone. The printers accordingly appeared at the Bar, and, after some embarrassing proceedings, in which the dignity of the House sorely suffered, they were begged to be good enough to go away. Which they regretfully did, having looked forward to the enjoyment of the distinction of at least a night's incarceration in the historic Clock Tower.

The Duke of Devonshire, then, as Lord Hartington, leading the Opposition, was so impressed with the absurdity of the situation that he submitted a series of resolutions designed to place the relations of Parliament

to reflect that in asserting them it invariably places itself in a ridiculous position. That is doubtless due to the fact that the privileges are anachronisms. So recently as the time of Dr. Johnson the reporting of Parliamentary proceedings was a breach of privilege sharply treated. Johnson, having undertaken to make such report for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, was obliged to veil his narrative under a fictitious form, under a fanciful title. To-day elaborate preparations, the cost of which figures yearly in the votes, are made for the accommodation in both Houses of Parliament for representatives of the Press. Yet to this day there remains unrepealed among the Standing Orders one declaring it a high misdemeanour to publish an account of Parliamentary proceedings.

Very early in the career of Parliamentary historiographer I myself was nearly cut off by the operation of this ancient ordinance. In the early seventies there was in the House of Commons a fussy Ulster Member named Charles Lewis. In the articles entitled "Under the Clock," then running in the newly created *World*, I freely descanted on his manner, his persistency, his blatancy, and his vanity. Such freedom of commentary upon members of this class is common enough now. It is part of the stock-in-trade of every daily and weekly journal publishing Parliamentary sketches. It was new in the early days of Edmund Yates's *magnum opus* and attracted some attention. The joyousness with which the personal references were read in the smoking room of the House of Commons aggravated Mr. Lewis's discontent. He saw in it a breach of privilege and consulted the Ministerial Whips as to the measure of support he might expect if he moved to have the culprit brought to the Bar of the House. The reception of his

and the Press upon a less grotesque footing than they stood by reason of the unrepealed Standing Order passed in Stuart times. Dizzy declined to deal with the matter. A whole sitting was occupied in acrimonious debate, partly carried on with closed doors. Entering into the spirit of the thing, an Irish Member invoked another absurdity among the Standing Orders. He "spied strangers," and straightway the Press Gallery, in common with those allotted to strangers, was cleared.

So recently as the eighties Privilege was invoked to prevent a duel between two Irish Members. One was Mr. O'Kelly, sometime War Correspondent of a London morning paper. The other was Mr. McCoan, a gentleman who tempered the privilege of an Irish seat with independence of the iron rule of Mr. Parnell. Offence was aggravated by his abstaining from voting against a motion for the suspension of O'Kelly, who had interrupted Forster, then Chief Secretary, with the statement thrice repeated "You lie!" O'Kelly having in a speech to his constituents commented on this so-called desertion of the Party, McCoan demanded retractation and full apology. He received the lofty reply: "Mr. O'Brien is authorised to act for me. I request that you will communicate with him and refer him to some gentleman authorised to act for you."

Here was something worse than flat burglary. McCoan was evidently to be shot—at best shot at—on sight. He hurried down to the House, made his plaint, and the truculent O'Kelly was, by resolution of the House, ordered to attend in his place on the following day. O'Kelly came down haughtily defiant. The House, he protested, was travelling outside its jurisdiction by interfering in the matter, one purely personal, which, he added amid irreverent laughter, "touches my

own dignity." As usual, the House having been dragged into this quandary, was chiefly anxious to get out of it. By persuasion in which Gladstone joined, O'Kelly was induced to say that since McCoan had thrown himself on the protection of the House the matter might be considered at an end. This contemptuous overture was eagerly seized upon, the subject dropped, and Members got to business.

A later ebullition of the question of Privilege was made memorable by a *tour de force* of Mr. Arthur Peel, the Speaker. A Select Committee dealing with a Bill promoted by the Cambrian Railway, called as a witness a station master in the service of the Company. His evidence being embarrassingly frank, he was, on returning home, dismissed from his post. This, as interfering with the free action of the Select Committee, was denounced as a Breach of Privilege. Order was accordingly issued that the Directors should present themselves at the Bar of the House. It chanced that one John William Maclure, familiarly known at Manchester and Westminster as John William, was Member for a division of Lancashire. That circumstance was of itself sufficient to add fun to the inevitable sport.

John William was one of the characters of the House. Amongst other peculiarities, he had a rooted belief in the efficacy of an ante-prandial glass of sherry. He not only took it himself but was the hospitable cause of others sharing in the medicament. There was a story current that, meeting the Bishop of Manchester in the Lobby at the consecrated sherry hour, he linked arms with the prelate, led him to the bar, then in the corner of the gallery, and ordered "two sherries." That was, of course, a fable, one of many good-humouredly circulated at the expense of John William.

When the alleged Breach of Privilege came on his fellow directors, brought in in custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms, stood trembling at the Bar. John William, as a Member of the House, was permitted to stand up in his place below the Gangway. The spectacle of the massive figure, decently dressed in black, with a carefully cultivated look of penitence on a rubicund countenance convulsed the House with laughter. Amid much merriment a resolution was submitted and carried, that the peccant directors should be reprimanded from the Chair. It was a minor, but a striking triumph in Mr. Peel's career that, by the mere force of his personality, he transformed the farce into semblance of a tragedy. There was something terrible in his mien, something awful in his voice as, standing up, he brought his observations to a conclusion by the declaration "the House has ordered me to reprimand you, AND YOU ARE HEREBY REPRIMANDED!" The two directors standing at the Bar were led forth in a limp condition, whilst John William sat back in his seat comparatively pallid in countenance.

The only time within my recollection when a Breach of Privilege case was conducted with anything approaching dignity happened in connection with the letters forged by Pigott and purporting to be written by Parnell. At the opening of the Session of 1890 Harcourt moved that this letter, published in the *Times*, was a forged and scandalous libel and a Breach of the Privilege of the House. The eminence of the Member moving, combined with the gravity of the situation, vested the occasion with rare, perhaps unique solemnity. Brought on on the first night of the Address, it occupied the whole of the sitting. The Government got out of the difficulty by carrying an

amendment which precluded the appearance at the Bar of the newspaper printers.

Scene V.—Alarums and Excursions.

Bradlaugh made many entrances and exits on the House of Commons stage, the scenes varying only in intensity. Sometimes the Member for Northampton, after the proverbial manner of March, coming in like a lion, went out like a lamb. At other times this procedure was reversed. Advancing with mincing step and bland smile towards the table with intent to take the oath, he has gone out raging and panting, captive of the spear of the Serjeant-at-Arms.

Like some other great storms, the Bradlaugh business, with which the House intermittently battled through three Sessions, began very quietly. Out of a cloud no bigger than a man's hand grew the violent and prolonged tempest.

When, in May, 1880, the newly elected Parliament which swept away by a sudden stroke the powerful administration of Lord Beaconsfield, met for the ceremony of swearing in, Mr. Bradlaugh appeared among the throng. He had already acquired a national reputation—or rather notoriety—for the boldness of his declarations on theological opinions. Northampton triumphantly established its eccentricity by returning him as the colleague of Mr. Labouchere.

The swearing in of a new Parliament is carried on in a wholesale manner, which seems to invite irregularity. In the case of bye-elections the new Member is sworn in with a certain deliberateness that invests the proceeding with importance. He is brought up to the table by

two Members who undertake to introduce him, and there, in the presence of a House always full at this hour of the evening, he has the oath administered.

When six hundred and fifty gentlemen come together for the first time to take the oath of fealty, it is done by a sort of wholesale process, forty or fifty being sworn in together.

Bradlaugh, had he been so minded, might, without remark, have taken his part in this not very impressive ceremony. Or, as has happened within my knowledge in at least one case, he need not have taken the oath at all. It is, at this stage, no one's business to inquire. No record is kept, and a Member may, if he please, take the oath early and take it often, or may altogether abstain.

Gladstone and his colleagues of the Cabinet were not in the House when the question first arose. Having accepted office, they were undergoing the process of re-election. A minor Minister was instructed to meet the case by the familiar process of moving for a Select Committee to inquire into precedence, and there it was thought the matter would end. In the brief interval, during which the House adjourned for the re-election of Ministers, the question grew as a fire grows when it has a fine old seasoned timber barn to play upon. When the House reassembled, it was plain enough that mischief was brewing. Stafford Northcote and other leaders of the Opposition did not quite know what to do, which gave the earliest proof that Henry Wolff and Randolph Churchill more truly gauged the temper of Conservatism in Opposition.

Bradlaugh met the objection to his making affirmation by blandly offering to take the oath. On this Henry Wolff moved that the oath be not administered, a

resolution rejected by a small majority. Six weeks later the growth of opinion was manifested when in a crowded House amid a scene of much excitement, two hundred and seventy-five voted against admitting Bradlaugh on any terms, two hundred and thirty voting that he be permitted to make affirmation.

The next day was Wednesday, when the House meets at noon. Usually the Chamber is so empty that there is difficulty in finding forty Members to make a House. Now every seat was filled, and there was everywhere that air of expectation which marks great epochs in the House of Commons.

Bradlaugh arrived some minutes before noon, waiting in the Lobby till prayers were concluded. Just on the stroke of half-past twelve, when Members had settled down in their places, when the last "amen" had been uttered, and when the skirts of the chaplain had vanished through the doorway, the massive, fleshy figure of the Member for Northampton was seen making straight for the table.

The Speaker informed him of the decision arrived at by the House at an early hour of the morning, and ordered him to retire. Bradlaugh, as through subsequent episodes, showed that he was nothing if not orderly. Bowing low to authority, he promptly retired, whilst Mr. Labouchere submitted the proposition that he be heard at the Bar. This was agreed to without controversy. The Bar of the House of Commons, of which so much is written in history, has an actual and visible existence. It is a brass pole which shuts up telescopic fashion through the back of the cross benches at the entrance.

The agitated messengers had scarcely drawn from its retreat this historic rod which means so much and is

shut up within so little, than Bradlaugh strode in and stood before it. It presently became clear that for the purpose of effective delivery of his speech, the adversaries of the outlawed Member had provided him with a singular advantage. Instead of speaking in the face of one-half of his audience, himself cooped up with other Members in a crowded bench, he now stood literally on the floor of the House, facing the crowded historic assembly, "one against six hundred," as he said.

Beginning in a low voice, he craved the indulgence of the House whilst he showed cause against the enactment of the resolution refusing his admission. He was there ready to fulfil every form and to undertake every duty commanded of him by his constituents. At present he was standing at the Bar pleading for justice. "But," he added, in a voice of thunder, pointing towards the benches under the Gangway, to the right of the Speaker, "it is there I should plead."

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked, suddenly dropping his voice from the height of passion to which it had been uplifted. Leaning lightly on the Bar he looked with placid interest round the House, as if the question were one in which he was only remotely interested. Would they declare the seat vacant? Well, he would be again returned. And what next.

"I have no desire to wrestle with you for justice," he continued, holding both hands out over the Bar with deprecating gesture. "But if the struggle is forced by the House, I will fearlessly and hopefully submit the cause to a tribunal higher than this great assembly, and will ask public opinion to decide between you and me." This said, Bradlaugh turned and left the House.

Members had not seen the last of him. Having

voted that admission should be denied, it did not seem that there was any occasion to take new steps or to hold further communication with him.

The Speaker ruled that he should be called in, and have formally communicated to him the decision of the House. This was done. The Speaker briefly recited the events of the sitting, and concluded by commanding him to withdraw.

"I beg, respectfully, to insist upon my right as duly elected Member for Northampton," Bradlaugh composedly replied. "I beg you to administer the oath, and I respectfully refuse to withdraw."

Never since the House was constituted had there been an incident like this. The Speaker was bearded in his Chair. The House stood aghast at the enormity of the offence. The Serjeant-at-Arms was ordered to remove Bradlaugh. At touch of the representative of the Queen, Bradlaugh, consumed with anxiety that everything should be in order, announced that he was prepared to go as far as the Bar, but promised immediately to return. This undertaking he faithfully fulfilled. Having quietly accompanied the Serjeant-at-Arms to the Bar, he abruptly turned and, moving again toward the table, he, with sweeping gesture of his right hand, claimed the right deputed to him by the electors of Northampton, to take his seat.

The veteran Serjeant-at-Arms gallantly tackled him. The burly intruder shook him off as if he had been a fly, and strode onward amid a scene of indescribable excitement. Half-a-dozen Members were addressing the Chair in as many parts of the House.

The Speaker was on his feet. Members were shouting and gesticulating, and here in the very centre of the floor, with stout legs firmly set apart, stood Bradlaugh,

determined and defiant. In the end he was got comfortably off to the Clock Tower, in custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms, whence a few days later he was entreated by his jailors to go forth, as in older times was the imprisoned apostle Paul.

Scene VI.—The Heyday of Obstruction.

On Thursday, the 4th of February, 1881, the House of Commons met under circumstances of extraordinary excitement.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the previous day a continuous sitting, forty-one hours long, was by action of the Speaker that will for ever remain memorable in the history of Parliament brought to an abrupt conclusion.

Parliament had been summoned a month earlier than usual. As was stated in the Queen's Speech, the social condition of Ireland had assumed an alarming character. Agrarian crimes were multiplied far beyond the experience of recent years. The administration of justice had been frustrated and an extended system of terror had been established, paralysing the exercise of private rights and the performance of civil duties.

To meet this condition of affairs a Bill for the protection of life and property in Ireland was brought in as the first business of the Session. Its introduction was deferred as late as possible by the tactics of the Irish Members, who ingeniously extended debate on the Address.

On the 1st of February the House was still discussing the motion for leave to introduce the Protection Bill, a stage in ordinary circumstances purely formal. Now it had been blocked for many days.

At midnight of Monday, the 1st day of March, the subject having been under discussion practically through three weeks, the customary motion for the adjournment of the debate was made from the Irish camp. But the patience of the House was exhausted. Uproarious cheering greeted the announcement quietly made by Mr. Gladstone that further motions for adjournment would be resisted, and the division on the main question taken at the current sitting, however protracted it might be.

What this meant everyone knew, and members on both sides quietly prepared for the struggle. The Irish mustered thirty-five. Against them was the whole House, full four hundred strong, as was shown when divisions were taken. Argument had long been abandoned on either side. The pending issue was plainly one of physical force. The question was no longer who had the better reason, but who was gifted with the stronger constitution and possessed the greater capacity for sitting up all night?

From dark to daylight on Tuesday morning the House sat. Noon found either Biggar, O'Donnell, Parnell, or some other patriot on his feet, wearily saying over again what had been said a hundred times.

The air of the House was hot and heavy. Over all hung a feeling of lassitude and infinite weariness. Motions for adjournment succeeded each other in faithful regularity. Sometimes variety was introduced by moving that the House be counted.

At midnight Stafford Northcote, Leader of the Opposition, rose and demanded that the Deputy Speaker should "name" Parnell, who then happened to be on his legs. Lyon Playfair hesitating, the Conservative Leader, followed by all his colleagues on the

Front Bench, and something like half a hundred Members from both sides of the House, hotly rose and strode forth, shaking from off their feet the dust of a Council Chamber where such doings were permitted.

At nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, 3rd of March, the House was still sitting. All night long the babble had continued with more or less volume of sound, according as passion was momentarily raised or lay dead under the weight of sleep and infinite weariness.

At this hour some flux of life pulsated through the chamber. Relays had begun to come in, fresh from bed and bath and breakfast. The men who had borne the heat and burden of the night shook themselves, yawned and made for the door. Reaching the Lobby they came back again with quickened step and freshened vigour.

Something was going to happen. No one quite knew what, but with the quick intelligence which at particular crises runs through the House of Commons like an electric shock, everyone was certain that momentous events were at hand.

Gladstone entering was received with a ringing cheer. Another cheer hailed the presence of the Speaker in the Chair, vacated by Lyon Playfair after his second night's work.

Biggar was on his legs at the moment, his rasping voice filling the Chamber with nothingness, a pleasing process upon which he had been engaged upwards of an hour. He looked up astonished at the thunderous cheer that interrupted his rambling remarks. What he beheld was the Speaker on his feet bidding him with peremptory gesture be seated. Joseph Gillis for once abashed, obeyed. Amid breathless silence the Speaker began to read from a paper that trembled like an aspen leaf in his hand.

For all his grave aspect and stolid quietude, Sir Henry Brand was a nervous man, bringing to the performance of his duty disturbing consciousness of its momentous character. The task he was now engaged upon was enough to shake nerves of steel. What he had to do was to declare on his own authority that debate in the House of Commons had exceeded reasonable limits, and that there and then it must stop and the arbitrament of the Division Lobby be invoked.

Never since Cromwell entered the House at the head of his men-at-arms had regular Parliamentary procedure been subject to this swift, arbitrary, cutting off by the mandate of a single man.

The Speaker, in spite of his nervousness, got through his task with great dignity, being strengthened by bursts of enthusiastic cheering that filled up each slightest pause. When he made an end of reading he proceeded in customary manner and in ordinary tone to put the question.

The Irish Members, dazed and stunned by this unexpected and irresistible movement, made brief show of fight. Justin McCarthy rose and essayed to speak. The House literally roared at him, the cries rising to a frantic pitch when a dozen Irishmen leaped up around him, and raising their hands in threatening gesture, cried aloud on that "Privilege" they had so sorely abused. Their cries were drowned in shouts of "Order!" and after an exciting contest of several minutes they bent their heads to the storm and with mock obeisance to the Speaker left the House. Whereupon leave was given to bring in the Protection Bill.

On the next night (Thursday) the excitement in Parliament and in the public mind reached even a higher pitch. With that curious fatality that marked

the administration of Irish affairs under Forster, this very day had been selected for taking a step which in the mildest mood would have exasperated the Irish Members.

Michael Davitt had been arrested, and thirty-five Irishmen were determined to know the reason why. The House presented a crowded and animated appearance. Every seat on the floor was filled. The galleries were crowded, and a throng stood at the Bar. The Peers' Gallery, which sometimes presents open spaces striking in a crowded House, was so full that royalty in the person of the Duke of Cambridge stood forlorn in the doorway.

The fight began by Parnell asking whether it was true that Michael Davitt had been arrested.

"Yes, sir," said Sir William Harcourt, Home Secretary, with commendable brevity.

Parnell wished to enter into controversy on the spot, but was ruled out of order. Presently Gladstone rose to move a new Standing Order against obstruction, suggested by the events of the first three days of the week.

Then John Dillon came to the front, and none better could have been chosen for the occasion. Free by birth and social surroundings from the noisy vulgarity that made some of his colleagues insufferable, it might reasonably have been expected he would perform his part with dignity. This he assuredly did. He had made up his mind for a death-struggle with the authority of the House; but he neither ranted nor raved. He simply stood with folded arms and stern set face disputing with the Prime Minister the right of addressing the House.

Of course they would not hear him, and he knew they

would not. None the less he stood there facing the infuriated assembly and defying the more quietly assumed authority of the Chair. He could not make himself heard. To sit down would have been to surrender. To remain standing, with the Speaker on his feet, was defiance of an elementary and inexorable rule of order. Having made up his mind to defy the House and take the consequences, he succeeded by the simplest plan in which there was the least loss of dignity. As he would not sit down, he was "named" as he stood there, always with folded arms, deathly pale face and quiet manner.

Then followed the process of expulsion, quickly followed by that of Parnell and Finigan. This process took time, as a division was challenged on every motion of suspension. Twenty minutes at least was occupied on each event, and here was a simple method at hand to give the House another all-night sitting.

In an evil moment for themselves the Irish Members hit upon a new plan of obstructing. They declined to go out into the Division Lobby, remaining seated in disobedience to the Speaker's command to clear the House. On this they were expelled in a body, thirty-seven all told, and at half-past eight Gladstone went back to the first sentence of the speech he had commenced at five o'clock, finishing it now amidst a quietude and orderliness about which there seemed something uncanny.

Before the House rose it passed a new Standing Order which dealt so heavy a blow at obstruction that it has never again reached the sublime heights attained at this memorable epoch.

Scene VII.—King Edward's First Parliament.

The first Parliament of King Edward VII. has certain marked characteristics, survey of which may fittingly close this study of modern Parliaments. To begin with it gives the Ministry of the day the largest majority known for more than half a century. That is not a condition conducive to activity or virility of Parliamentary life. When the Government Whip has at his command a majority over-topping any possible combination of Opposition forces, the fighting spirit is vanquished. The element of uncertainty which adds zest to Successive Divisions, is non-existent. Like the dwellers in Lotus Land, the Opposition ask,

> "What pleasure can we have
> To war with evil? Is there any peace
> In ever climbing up the climbing wave?"

The ideal condition for the growth and culture of lively times was developed in the Parliament elected in 1892, which gave Gladstone a maximum majority of forty. No one knew what a day or night might bring forth. It did amongst other things produce the historic free fight on the floor of the House which marked the last Stage of Committee on the Home Rule Bill.

Amongst the vast Ministerial majority of to-day, not always to be counted upon to maintain its full muster, is the Labour Party. Whatever its final achievements may be, King Edward's first Parliament will live in history as the one in which the British Working Man succeeded in establishing a substantial numerical representation. The Labour Member made his first appearance at Westminster on the flood-tide of Liberalism that swept away the party educated by Disraeli. Mr. Burt.

it is true, was returned to the Parliament of 1874; but his election was a stray incident. It was not till the year 1900 that an extensive, well organised attempt was made by the Labour Party to capture seats. At the General Election in that year thirty-one Labour candidates offered themselves, half a dozen boldly flaunting the Socialist banner. Only nine won seats, and these were chiefly old stagers like John Burns, Broadhurst, Burt, Fenwick, Pickard, and Cremer. But during the Bye-elections significant successes were won by Labour Members, who before Parliament had run its course, nearly doubled their forces. The tide rose mightily at the Election of January, 1906. Against fifteen Labour Members, who sat under the leadership of Mr. Balfour, fifty-three were returned, more or less to support Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

No sooner was the phalanx sworn in than it split up into two sections, hating each other for the love of the working man. One calling itself the Independent Labour Party, sits below the Gangway on the Opposition side, under the leadership of Mr. Keir Hardie. Forming part of the Ministerial ranks, generally counted upon by the Government Whip, are twenty-five other Labour Members, who spare themselves the luxury of a nominal leader. Eleven of these are returned by the miners, the majority having official connection with miners' associations. The others—Mr. Bell, for example, who efficiently represents the railway men—care for the interests of fellow-workers in other branches.

In management of his little party Mr. Keir Hardie manifestly has in view the Parliamentary force fashioned under the iron hand of Mr. Parnell. The practice of sitting below the Gangway on the Opposition side is a

direct imitation of the Irish Nationalists. Up to 1880 they, in accordance with the tradition that linked them with the Liberal Party, crossed the floor of the House at successive turns of the wheel of fortune. When Gladstone came in with a rush in 1880, they resolved to remain in their old quarters below the Gangway where (the pleasure not being mutual) they enjoyed the neighbourhood and society of English landed gentry.

The Independent Labour Members carry further the parallel with the Irish Nationalists inasmuch as they are paid a fixed sum for their Parliamentary service. The societies affiliated with their Committee levy on their members a tax of one penny per head per annum. This does not seem much, but it indicates a significant fact. So wide is the membership behind the Independent Labour Party that this small tax is sufficient to pay £200 a year to each of its representatives at Westminster.

It will be perceived that here, in analogous circumstances, is renewed the bond that proved so powerful in the hands of Parnell. His followers were of course pure patriots, inspired by love of Ireland, willing to devote their lives to their country's interests. At the same time, in addition to the status of M.P., they were paid an average of £5 per week, dispensed at weekly gatherings by their chancellor of the exchequer, the ever lamented Joseph Gillis Biggar.

The conduct of the Labour Members, who appreciably leaven the mass of the new Parliament, has naturally been closely scrutinised. In the main they have triumphantly borne the ordeal. In fact they have in some respects set an example to older Members more familiar with the wearing of broadcloth. They confine their interposition in debate to topics with which they

are personally familiar. With few exceptions they are commendably brief in delivery of their speeches. It is curious to note how rapidly they fall in with the customs of etiquette that govern procedure in the House. An old pal, for years familiar as Bill or Tom or Jack, is ever scrupulously alluded to in debate as "My honourable friend the Member for ——." Their deference to the ruling of the Chair is ready and complete. Presumably, since they have been selected to represent them at Westminster, the flower of their respective flocks, they have in one Session added appreciably to the esteem with which public opinion in these modern days regards the working man.

Apart from the incursion of the Labour Members, doubtless in some measure due to it, the present House of Commons is a thing so wide apart from its predecessor, that it is difficult to realise that the two were born in the same century. Necessarily an evolution that transforms a majority of 200 into a minority of 300 alters the appearance of the House. To one intimately familiar with the *personnel* of the last Parliament, the new one is doubly strange. Up to the end of the Session of 1905 to walk across the Lobby of the House of Commons was to find oneself at every point at touch with personal friends. To enter the Lobby now on a crowded afternoon is an experience akin to that of looking in at Victoria or Charing Cross Railway Station at the hour of its busiest traffic.

The transformation scene sorely tried the Speaker and the Chairman of Committees, liable at any moment to be confronted by an unfamiliar figure rising from either side. In the early days of the new Parliament I asked the Speaker how he managed never to seem at fault. He confided to me that, like General Trochu at

the siege of Paris, he "had a plan." Mentally he mapped out the benches in sections, and whilst a Member was addressing the House he studied the appearance of others seated in a particular quarter. With the aid of the illustrated Catalogue of Members, supplemented by assistance from the Clerk of the Table, his private secretary, and other authorities, he managed day by day to add certain groups to his personal acquaintance.

It was assumed that the Labour Members, lacking sympathy with Mr. Balfour at all points, would demolish his pet device of transposing the conditions of Wednesday and Friday sittings with a view to the House rising at 5.30 on the latter day. But one touch of week-ending makes all classes kin. To the general surprise they made common cause with their wealthier brethren, who have country houses or South Coast hotels to repair to from Friday evening to Monday. The old arrangement was consequently, on a division, confirmed.

On another point of procedure the Labour Members made their influence felt. Under the old order of things debate automatically stood adjourned on the stroke of midnight. The hour of meeting being deferred by fifty minutes, the Prime Minister suggested that debate should close at half-past eleven. The Labour Members insisted on closing the shop at eleven o'clock, and order was made accordingly.

Few are left of old Members who lived in times when it was no uncommon thing after heated debate, to go home with the milk in the morning. To these the new time-table is still strange. Hardly are they back from dinner, than the House is up. The new departure—to be precise, the new hour of departure—has marked influence upon the tone of the House. It reduces it more than ever to the level of a prosaic business assembly.

CHAPTER IX.

PARLIAMENTARY MANNERS.

On the 18th of May, 1885, on the occasion of one of Gladstone's latest appearances in the House of Commons as Leader in his second Administration, there happened a remarkable and lamentable scene. The motion before the House was for a vote of three millions on account of the Estimates. Lord Randolph Churchill seized the opportunity to deliver a cursory speech on affairs in Afghanistan. Gladstone, rising to reply, was subjected to treatment by gentlemen opposite which exceeded the bounds to which the House had of late been accustomed. Every remark was interrupted by cries of "No! No!" by ironical cheering, bursts of forced laughter, and once by groans.

After struggling for some time with these difficulties, the Premier paused and said, "It is hardly possible to do justice to the proper respect I owe to the House, and to preserve the proper and necessary continuity of remark in what I have to say, if conduct so extraordinary and so unparalleled——" Here Sir Michael Hicks Beach interposed with a negative. "Yes," said Mr. Gladstone, leaning across the table and personally addressing the right honourable baronet, "I must tell the Member for Gloucestershire that it is unparalleled, and I am sorry that he should give it encouragement."

It is a hazardous thing to dissent from the opinion

expressed by so high an authority. Gladstone had at the time he spoke been for fifty years a principal figure in the House of Commons, and a close observer of its manners. Moreover, he was in this particular dictum supported by general conviction. A score of times during the existence of the Parliament of 1880-5, the newspapers, mirroring public opinion, solemnly declared that matters in the House of Commons had reached an unparalleled pitch of disorder, and that something must be done. This conviction took practical shape in the winter of 1882, when a special Session was held in order to devise means for grappling with the growing disorder. A number of rules were then, after prolonged debate, agreed to and added to the statute-book. It was two years and a half later that Gladstone made the declaration above alluded to, lamenting the unparalleled condition of affairs which "struck a fatal blow at the liberties of debate and at the dignity of Parliament."

With respect to the personal attacks to which the Premier was subjected during that memorable Parliament, more particularly in its final Session, his memory was short if he were inclined to believe that even in regard to himself this was a new thing. In the closing Session of the Parliament of 1868 these demonstrations were not unknown. The halo which surrounded Gladstone, flushed with the overwhelming majority that returned him in 1868 with the mandate to do justice to Ireland, had in the Session of 1873 entirely disappeared. There was even on his own side indications of failing fealty. The Nonconformists in particular, alienated by Mr. Forster's manipulation of the Education Bill, had begun to grow restive.

It was in the Parliament of 1874 that there was

made apparent in organised form that discourteous personal treatment of which Gladstone eleven years later complained as "unparalleled." It was now the turn of the Conservatives to be jubilant. Gladstone had been hurled from his high place and Disraeli reigned in his stead. In 1873 he was still invested with the authority of supreme official position. His name was one to conjure with throughout the constituencies. No one could safely affirm that at the pending General Election he would not be reinstated even with added strength.

From 1874 to 1880 he was doubly discredited. He was not even leader of his own party, whom he embarrassed by his fitful coming and going, his intervals of retirement and his sudden flashing forth as the only possible chief. It was safe to assail him then (as Sir William Harcourt agreed) and the opportunity was unreservedly seized. His interposition in debate was the signal for outcries that would have disgraced a bear-garden. The new Parliament was only six weeks old when Mr. Smollet, amid a hurricane of cheers from the Conservatives, made a deliberate attack upon him, accusing him of "organising a dissolution in secret and springing it upon the House"; of having by "unworthy, improper, and unconstitutional methods tried to seize power"; finishing up a long tirade with congratulating the House and the country that "the stratagem had recoiled on the head of the trickster."

When on the 7th of May, 1877, Gladstone proposed to submit his five resolutions on the Eastern Question, a wrangle of two hours' duration, of which he personally bore the brunt, preceded the opportunity for commencing his speech. A year later he was literally mobbed in the division lobby by a body of from forty to fifty English

Conservative gentlemen, who, coming suddenly upon him issuing from the Opposition lobby, yelled and howled as if he were a mad dog.

These are personal experiences which seem, happily, to have faded from Gladstone's mind. Had they occurred to him he certainly would not have felt justified in describing somewhat similar events in a later Session as "unparalleled." What is quite true is that for a long period there had been no occasion when a Leader of the House of Commons had been subjected to the treatment of which Gladstone pathetically complained. Disraeli was to the Liberal Party an object of detestation in degree at least equal to that in which the Conservatives held Gladstone. But there is no instance on record through the duration of his Leadership of the House when Disraeli was treated otherwise than with respect. Lord Palmerston, whilst Leader of the House, was regarded with something like reverence. Earl Russell, though not personally so acceptable to Members, never had occasion to complain of discourtesy.

If we go back to Sir Robert Peel we shall find a singularly close parallel to the circumstances under which Gladstone, through many Sessions, endeavoured to discharge his duty as Leader of the House. In both cases certain Members fastened themselves upon the great man, and succeeded in raising themselves into a position of notoriety by their persistent attacks. Sir Robert Peel, after he had owned his conversion to the Free Trade principles preached by Cobden, suffered in manner curiously similar to that of which Gladstone complained. Disraeli combined in himself the qualities which in the 1880-5 Parliament distinguished Lord Randolph Churchill and Mr. Ashmead Bartlett, and he set himself to bait Sir Robert Peel with a relentless

pertinacity which those two gentlemen never succeeded in excelling.

Instances might be multiplied from a study of Hansard in the Sessions of 1842-5. One will suffice. I take it from the report of the adjourned debate on the Maynooth grant on the 11th of April, 1845. Speaking of Sir Robert Peel Disraeli said :—

"I know the right hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill told us that upon this subject there were three courses open to us. I never heard the right hon. gentleman bring forward a measure without making the same confession. In a certain sense, and looking to his own position, he is right. There is the course the right hon. gentleman has left. There is the course which the right hon. gentleman is following; and there is usually the course which the right hon. gentleman ought to pursue. . . . . He also tells us he always looks back to precedents; he comes with a great measure and he always has a small precedent. He traces the steam engine always back to the tea-kettle. His precedents are generally tea-kettle precedents. . . . . Something has risen up in this country as potent in the political world as it has been in the landed world of Ireland. We have a great Parliamentary middleman. It is well known what a middleman is: he is the man who bamboozles one party and plunders the other, till, having obtained a position to which he is not entitled, he cries out, 'Let us have no party questions, but fixity of tenure.' . . . . Let us in the House re-echo that which I believe to be the sovereign sentiment of this country; let us tell persons in high places that cunning is not caution, and that habitual perfidy is not high policy of State. On that ground we may all join. Let us bring to this House that which it has for so long a time past been without—the legitimate

influence and salutary check of a constitutional opposition. That is what the country requires, what the country looks for. Let us do it at once in the only way in which it can be done, by dethroning the dynasty of deception, by putting an end to the intolerable yoke of Parliamentary imposture."

This is a passage which if it appeared in any newspaper during the heyday of the Fourth Party as an extract from a speech by Lord Randolph Churchill delivered in the House of Commons, and having Gladstone for a subject, would have been unhesitatingly accepted. It is interesting to observe how closely the earlier style of Disraeli was caught by the noble lord.

It is curious to note the common holding by master and disciple of two marked peculiarities. Gladstone's three courses was a notorious point in his speeches, and the generation which habitually heard them set forth came to think it was his own. But we have Sir Robert Peel taunted with it forty years earlier, just as the smaller wits on the Conservative side made merry with it at the expense of Gladstone. There is also a close similarity in the passion for precedents. In Gladstone's mind precedents loomed in such huge disproportion that in his famous speech on moving the Vote of Credit for eleven millions he imperilled its effect by spending a quarter of an hour in reciting precedents for the particular procedure the Government had adopted in introducing the Vote.

The parallel between what Sir Robert Peel in his own case called "the venomous attacks" upon Gladstone and his great predecessor does not fail when we look at the House of Lords. During the Corn Law debates the Prime Minister was there the object of constant attacks. Once Lord Western, complaining that the agriculturists

had been deceived by Sir Robert Peel, brought up the Duke of Wellington in mighty wrath to give him the lie.

"The noble lord should have waited for the opportunity of stating the when and the how, and in what words my right hon. friend has deceived the public. But, my lords, I deny the fact, and as formally and as emphatically as the noble lord has stated it. I say it is not true, and that's the end of it."

Another charge brought against the modern Parliaments in proof of their degeneracy is in the matter of obstruction. It is quite true that the Parliament of 1880 suffered from obstruction which to a considerable extent paralysed it. But though it is to the credit, or otherwise, of the Irish Members that they reduced obstruction to a fine art, they cannot claim to be the inventors of the Parliamentary weapon. During the Reform debate of 1831 obstruction, at least on one occasion, reached the stage of an all-night sitting. This happened on the 12th of July, 1831, when the House of Commons was faced by the proposal to go into Committee to consider the Reform Bill. The House divided again and again on the alternative motions that "Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair," and that "the House do now adjourn." Beginning at the usual hour on Tuesday, the House adjourned at half-past seven in the morning of Wednesday. Sir Charles Wetherell was the Parnell of the period, and it is reported of him that his natural triumph at thus resisting Reform was tempered by the discovery on leaving the House in the early morning that it was raining heavily. "By G——!" he exclaimed, pulling up his trousers to meet his waistcoat, "if I had known this they should have had a few more divisions."

Sir Charles, I may add in illustration of the personal

manners of those lamented days, had a strong aversion to wearing braces. The consequence was that when he addressed the House in his excited manner there gradually became visible a broadening interval of white showing between his waistcoast and his trousers. Someone mentioning this to the Speaker, the right hon. gentleman said, "Yes, that's Wetherell's only lucid interval."

It is, however, not necessary to go back as far as the Reform debates to find examples of obstruction. "Jemmy" Lowther and Cavendish Bentinck, both gone to another place, would have been able to supply many instances from their experience of the Parliament of 1868 in the debates on the Irish Church Bill and the Irish Land Bill.

It is further charged against recent Parliaments that the authority of the Chair has declined, and that therefore have become possible a series of personal altercations and a succession of scenes unknown in former days. This is also a charge that will not bear reference to authenticated records. In the very earliest days of the first Parliament summoned by Queen Victoria, the Speaker was driven so nearly to despair by the unruly conduct of the House that he declared from the Chair if such a scene were repeated he would have no option but to resign.

The debate arose on a motion by Mr. Smith O'Brien challenging the legality of a public subscription set on foot to defray the cost of petitions against Irish Members. It was in the course of this debate, and on the night after the Speaker had forlornly threatened to resign, that Disraeli made his maiden speech. We have had in later days scenes of uproar where an undesirable Member has persisted in inflicting a speech on an unwilling

audience. But a brief passage from the report of Mr. Disraeli's historic speech will bring the scene of tumult vividly before the mind of the reader.

"I stand here to-night, Sir, not formally, but in some degree virtually, the representative of a considerable number of Members of Parliament. (Bursts of laughter.) Now, why smile? (Continued laughter.) Why envy me? (Here the laughter became long and general.) Why should not I have a tale to unfold to-night? (Roars of laughter.) Do you forget that band of 158 Members—those ingenuous and inexperienced youths to whose unsophisticated minds the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in those tones of winning pathos—(Excessive laughter and loud cries of 'Question!'). Now a considerable misconception exists in the minds of many Members on this side of the House as to the conduct of Her Majesty's Government with respect to these elections, and I wish to remove it. I will not twit the noble lord opposite with opinions which are not ascribable to him or to his more immediate supporters, but which were expressed by the more popular section of his party some months back. About that time, Sir, when the bell of our cathedral announced the death of the monarch—(laughter)—we all read then, Sir—(groans and cries of 'Oh!')—we all then read"—(laughter and great interruption).

There were times, more especially in the 1874-80 Parliament, when Parnell stood pale and passionate before an angry House of Commons, shouting defiance in occasional lulls in the storm. That was a shocking thing, bringing the level of the House of Commons down to the lowest verge reached by a vestry. But here is O'Connell addressing the House of Commons on the 14th of May, 1838:—

"Shall Ireland," he asked, "be governed by a section? (Vehement shouts from the Opposition.) I thank you —(noise renewed)—for that shriek. Many a shout of insolent domination—(noise)—despicable and contemptible as it is—(noise)—have I heard against my country. (Uproar continued, during which Mr. O'Connell, with uplifted fist and great violence of manner, uttered several sentences which were inaudible in the gallery. The Speaker was at last obliged to interfere and call the House to order.) Let them shout. It is a senseless yell. It is the spirit of the party that has placed you there. Ireland will hear your shrieks. (Continued uproar.) Yes, you may want us again. (Roars of laughter.) What would Waterloo have been if we had not been there? (Ministerial cheers and Opposition laughter.)"

The most deplorable outbreak of ill manners occurred in that famous night in June, 1894, when Mr. Chamberlain's similitude of Gladstone to King Herod led to a free fight on the floor of the House of Commons. In Macaulay's Diary we find notes of a scene in some aspects worse than that lamentable episode.

"Thursday, June 11, 1840. I went from the Office to the House, which was engaged upon Stanley's Irish Registration Bill. The night was very stormy. I have never seen such unseemly demeanour, or heard such scurrilous language in Parliament. Lord Norreys was whistling, and making all sorts of noises. Lord Maidstone was so ill-mannered that I hope he was drunk. At last, after much grossly indecent conduct, at which Lord Eliot expressed his disgust to me, a furious outbreak took place. O'Connell was so rudely interrupted that he used the expression 'beastly bellowings.' Then rose such an uproar as no O.P. mob at Covent

Garden Theatre,—no crowd of Chartists in front of a hustings,—ever equalled. Men on both sides stood up, shook their fists, and bawled at the top of their voices. O'Connell raged like a mad bull; and our people—I for one—while regretting and condemning his violence, thought it much extenuated by the provocation. Charles Buller spoke with talent, as he always does; and with earnestness, dignity and propriety, which he scarcely ever does. A short and most amusing scene passed between O'Connell and Lord Maidstone, which in the tumult escaped the observation of many, but which I watched carefully. 'If,' said Lord Maidstone, 'the word "beastly" is retracted, I shall be satisfied. If not, I shall not be satisfied.' 'I do not care whether the noble lord be satisfied or not.' 'I wish you would give me satisfaction.' 'I advise the noble lord to carry his liquor meekly.' At last the tumult ended from a physical weariness. It was past one, and the steady bellowers of the Opposition had been howling from six o'clock with little interruption."

A great feature in the Parliament of 1880-5, which did much to strengthen general opinion as to House of Commons degeneracy, was the scenes occasioned by the attempts of Mr. Bradlaugh to take his seat whilst declared disqualified to take the oath. But that was not any newer than were the personal attacks upon the Leader of the House, or the all-night sittings. On the 18th of July, 1851, Mr. Salomans, having been elected for Greenwich, presented himself at the table to take his seat. Mr. Salomans was a Jew, and naturally declined to repeat the words then contained in the oath —"upon the true faith of a Christian." The Speaker ordered him to withdraw just as Sir Henry Brand ordered Bradlaugh to retire. Mr. Salomans, instead

of obeying the order, walked over to the benches, took his seat—just as Bradlaugh did—and, just as in 1880 a section of the House cheered Bradlaugh and the majority yelled and howled, so on this July day, thirty-four years earlier, a tempest of shouting and cheering filled the House whilst the unsworn Member for Greenwich remained seated. The parallel is further established by the fact that when the Leader of the House was asked if the Government intended to take proceedings against Mr. Salomans, Lord John Russell replied that they had no such intention.

On the 21st of July Mr. Salomans again attempted to take his seat—just as Bradlaugh renewed his attempt. An amendment was moved declaring that, being duly elected, he was entitled to fulfil the functions of a Member, a motion defeated by 229 votes to 81. Mr. Salomans voted in two divisions. The Speaker directed the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him. The Serjeant touched him on the shoulder and he retired — all this through a scene of noisy excitement. In reading this we seem to be turning over the pages of the Parliamentary reports of the Sessions of 1880 and 1881.

A further and last illustration of Parliamentary manners in the early part of the late reign is to be found in the forgotten incident of Mr. Horsman's duel with Mr. Bradshaw. Mr. Bradshaw was Tory Member for Canterbury, and at a meeting of his constituents thus discussed affairs in Parliament:—

"The Prime Minister," he said, "tells us with rare effrontery that it is his duty to get support wherever he can. Nothing is too low or too foul for his purpose. The stews of the Tower Hamlets and the bogs of Ireland are ransacked for recruits; and thus he crawls on, having cast behind him every feeling of honour and

high principle. But his sheet-anchor is the body of Irish papists and rapparees whom the priests return to the House of Commons. . . . . Yet on these men are bestowed the countenance and support of the Queen of Protestant England. But alas! Her Majesty is Queen only of a faction, and is as much a partisan as the Lord Chancellor himself."

Mr. Horsman, addressing his constituents a short time after, retorted that "Mr. Bradshaw has the tongue of a traitor, but lacks the courage to become a rebel." After this interchange of amenities there seemed no alternative but the flow of blood. A meeting was accordingly arranged, and took place at Wormwood Scrubbs. No one was hurt, and Mr. Bradshaw having apologised for the reference to the Queen, Her Majesty's self-constituted champion declared himself satisfied and the matter ended.

Whilst I contend, with the support of these reminiscences, which might be indefinitely extended, that in respect of personal manners the House of Commons to-day is no worse than any summoned during the past half-century, manners in the House of Lords have decidedly improved. What would be thought of a conversation like the following taking place in the House of Lords at the present day? It occurred during the Reform debates in the Session of 1832, on the question of the enfranchisement of Oldham. Lord Kenyon declared that the Reform Bill would be the destruction of the Monarchy, and affirmed that Earl Grey's conduct in forcing the measure upon his reluctant Sovereign was abandoned and atrocious.

Earl Grey (interrupting with great warmth, and amid vehement cheering): "Atrocious, my lords? I put it

to your lordships, Is it consistent with the usages of this House, or with ordinary propriety, that the noble lord should apply such words to me? For my part I can only reject the words with contempt and scorn."

Lord Kenyon: "I repeat that I think such conduct most abandoned and atrocious. Whether the noble lord be pleased or not with my using the word atrocious, the privileges of the House have not been abrogated to such an extent that the noble earl can prevent me from saying that I shall always feel that it was the most atrocious act of the Minister to give such advice to the King."

Earl Grey: "Anything more unparliamentary, disorderly, and atrocious than the applying of such words to me I never heard in this House. It is for the House to act as may seem befitting its own dignity; but for me, all that remains to me is to throw back those words with scorn, contempt, and indignation."

Lord Brougham was a kind of hand-grenade, warranted to go off at all kinds of unexpected periods. An innocent interjection of Lord Melbourne whilst he was speaking, in the Session of 1837, on the increase of the grant to the Duchess of Kent, brought forth a torrent of sarcastic vituperation. Lord Brougham confessed that he was but rude in speech, but ill versed in terms of courtly etiquette. His noble friend had so much more recently been accustomed to the language of the Court than he had, was so much more of the courtier, his tongue was so well hung and framed and attuned to courtly airs, he was so much better acquainted with the motions of those who glozed and fawned and bent the knee in Courts, that he could not pretend for a moment to compete with the noble viscount in such matters, or to pretend to anything like the same accurate knowledge

of courtly phraseology. He, however, knew the difference between a queen-mother and the mother of a queen, perhaps, as well as the noble viscount.

Lord Melbourne replied that he did not understand anything about hanging a tongue with reference to this matter. But this he would say, and he begged his noble and learned friend to understand, that when he spoke of gloze and flattery and bending the knee, he knew no man in this country, be he who he might, who could more gloze and flatter and bend the knee than his noble and learned friend, and he felt totally unable to compete with him when he had an opportunity or when he found any occasion to exercise it. Lord Brougham retorted that he had said nothing about hanging a tongue—and so on.

This is more like the famous quarrel between Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig than anything known to the present Chamber.

Turning over the pages of Hansard, I find two years later Lords Lansdowne and Lyndhurst in a terrible quarrel. Lord Lansdowne accused Lord Lyndhurst of "making an alien's speech." Great uproar followed, in which Lord Brougham naturally intervened, and in the course of his speech gave the following remarkable testimony to the ordinary course of things in the House. Accused of being out of order, he said: "We have been out of order, no doubt, but not more disorderly than we have been every other night of the Session." This, coming from the lips of so high an authority, cannot be disputed.

It is no new thing to hear the House of Commons of the day denounced as worse by comparison with those that have preceded it. There have been great men before Agamemnon, but the natural tendency of mankind

is to believe there have been none since. "When will you see another Canning?" Disraeli exclaimed in the House of Commons in the course of the adjourned debate on the Coercion Bill (there were Coercion Bills even in those days) on the 12th of June, 1846—"a man who ruled this House as a high-bred steed. The temper of the House is not now as spirited as it was then, and I am not surprised that the vulture rules where once the eagle reigned."

Such a line of argument and assertion is common to a large class of humanity. In lauding times that are no more we seem subtly to enjoy the satisfaction of personally associating ourselves with them and dissevering ourselves from the degeneracy we lament. The irrefragable proof of citation from the records of Parliaments that have gone before shows that on the whole in respect of manners the latest House of Commons is not worse but better than any that have preceded it.

CHAPTER X.

PROCEDURE IN TWO HEMISPHERES.

(1) Westminster.

The House of Commons, open to conviction in political matters, has always shown itself stubbornly conservative where its procedure is concerned. When, twenty-five years ago Gladstone, faced by organised obstruction led by Parnell, made elaborate attempt to introduce reform he stirred profound resentment, not wholly confined to the Opposition benches, then peopled by the Conservatives. The closure in particular raised a storm of vehement resistance. Of thirty-three days spent in considering the New Rules brought forward in the Session of 1882, fully one-half were appropriated for debate on that particular point. Gladstone, with characteristic subtlety, declined to call the process the closure, much less to use the French term *clôture*. "Putting the question" was the official term with which he endowed it. The phrase deceived no one and pleased few. At first there was a tendency to talk and write about *clôture*. Speedily the English word assumed dominancy. It is interesting to note that to this day Gladstone's phrase officially survives. A Member desiring to hasten a division does not beg to move the closure. He moves "That the question be now put."

The closure machinery organised by 'prentice hands

during the height of Irish obstruction in 1882 proved hopelessly unwieldy. The initiative was entrusted to the Speaker or the Chairman of Ways and Means. When one or other considered enough had been said, he was empowered to order a division to be taken forthwith. The privilege of Members and the freedom of minorities were safeguarded by the stipulation that in order to carry the closure not fewer than two hundred Members must take part in the division deciding the question. There followed from the rule thus framed the inevitable conclusion. The Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means, shrinking from the invidious position of peremptorily closing debate, the Standing Order became a dead letter. Five years later, a Conservative Government being in power, the salutary rule was made really effective. To-day the closure may, with the consent of the Speaker or Chairman, be moved on the initiative of any Member, but a majority of one hundred Members is required in order to carry it. This allotment of initiative and confirmation works admirably. If the Speaker thinks the closure motion is an abuse of the rules of the House or an infringement of the rights of the minority, he may, and frequently does, refuse to put the question.

A Liberal Government introduced the principle of the closure. Successive Conservative Governments have perfected it. Mr. W. H. Smith, whose name will be found in every division list in the Session of 1882 hostile to the closure, four years later becoming Leader of the House of Commons, habitually and gratefully invoked it in the interests of public business. So constant was the habit that a familiar word came to have a new Parliamentary meaning. When debate had dragged itself out to undue length, Mr. W. H. Smith

would be observed to gather himself up and seat himself on the extreme edge of the Treasury Bench. This attitude came to be recognised as being "on the pounce." It was the familiar preliminary to the Leader of the House moving the closure.

The greatest reformer of Parliamentary procedure is the present Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Gladstone planted; Mr. W. H. Smith watered: Mr. Balfour has widely extended the range of culture. The Liberal Premier, as we have seen, hampered by prejudice, succeeded after long effort in driving through the House an unworkable machine. A Conservative Government under the leadership of Mr. W. H. Smith sharpened ends, the rough-hewing of which they had sturdily resisted. Both were content to closure by units, requiring a separate motion upon successive questions, with the inevitable division for each case. Mr. Balfour, ruthlessly going to the root of the matter, invented a system known as closure by compartments, applying it systematically and automatically to the process of Supply.

This was approached by an earlier reform carried in 1896, which has done much to lessen the grave scandal of rushing Supply through a fagged House "kept in" during the month of August or even September. Under the old order of things, Supply was taken at odd times when nothing else claimed precedence. The votes had to be agreed to before prorogation was possible. If they were not cleared off before August, the House must sit all night if necessary till Supply was voted. Mr. Balfour's plan was as simple as it has proved effective and beneficial in the public service. In accordance with it, twenty days, being days before the 5th of August, are allotted for the consideration of the annual estimates for the Army, Navy, and Civil

Services. The Leader of the House is permitted to move the allotment of three supplementary days, a privilege, as a matter of fact, regularly claimed. As soon as the Address is got out of the way, Supply is taken in hand, one whole sitting in every week being allotted for the purpose. The House knows where it stands in respect of this important matter. It has a maximum of twenty-three days wherein to discuss it, and shall have neither less nor more. On the twenty-second day the Chairman will, on the stroke of ten o'clock, proceed to put the remaining votes, with intent to terminate the labours of the Committee at the current sitting. On the next, the twenty-third day, the report stage will be dealt with in the same fashion, and there is an end of the business.

In the earlier Sessions of the operation of the first edition of this Standing Order, the Mother of Parliaments presented a lamentable sight. The Chairman was obliged to put every outstanding vote individually, his declaration that "the Ayes have it" being answered by angry shouts from the Noes. Thereupon a division took place, the process lengthening out till the break of a new day gleamed on haggard faces. Five years ago Mr. Balfour boldly grappled with this absurdity. He amended the rule by directing that on the Civil Service estimates the question may be put with respect to each class of outstanding votes. With respect to the Navy, Army, and Revenue departments, the total amount of the votes outstanding on the final day is put from the Chair, and only one division is possible. Thus without varying practical effect, some hours of childish marching and counter-marching are saved, and the danger of shortening valuable lives is minimised.

Like all other efforts in the same direction, these

reforms were hotly denounced when first proposed. It was said that the priceless privilege of Members to air grievances before voting Supply was tampered with. To-day there is no Member who would uplift his voice in favour of repealing the new ordinances. As a matter of fact, the Votes are more fully and sanely discussed than was the case under the old rules. The House comes to their consideration whilst its withers are yet unwrung. The fixity of the arrangement enables Members concerned with particular questions so to shape their engagements as to be in their place when, on successive Thursdays, the House goes into Committee of Supply. This serves the interest of the State. The personal interest and convenience of Members are gratified by the automatic ending of the Session. Time was when neither Ministers nor unofficial Members could make definite holiday arrangements in view of the long recess. The date of the Prorogation was on the knees of the gods below the Gangway on the Opposition side. Before 1882 they could, and did, defer it indefinitely. Up to 1896 they were, in spite of the closure, to a considerable extent masters of the situation. Now they are helpless. Whatever humour they may be in, Supply will be finally closed on the 8th of August, and the Session cannot be prolonged beyond the few days necessary for the process of carrying the Appropriation Bill through its varied stages. If these iron-bound rules meant restriction of opportunity for discussing Supply they would be open to grave objection. I repeat the assertion, which I venture to think will be supported by all Members of old standing, that never before was Supply treated in so business-like a fashion as that which prevails under the new Order.

The most drastic, far-reaching alteration in procedure was adopted in May, 1902. Four years earlier an attempt to limit late sittings was made by the Speaker taking the Chair an hour earlier. Up to 1888 the Speaker was seated at four o'clock. The first half-hour was devoted to private business. If that were disposed of in time, questions commenced at half-past four, the business of the day coming on at an indefinite, ever-varied time. Looking back a quarter of a century, a period at which the archaic procedure was unreformed, it is difficult to understand how any measure of public business was achieved. It was done only by sitting far into the night and deferring the Prorogation till the approach of September. In those good old times a Member, having had his more or less voluminous question printed at public expense, read out every word of it as a preliminary to the Ministerial answer. The consequence was that at the best of times the business of the sitting was not approached till nearly six o'clock.

At one of the worst of times it was not reached till one o'clock in the following morning. That was the historic occasion when Mr. O'Donnell, dissatisfied with the answer given to a studiously insulting question affecting the French Minister at the Court of St. James's, moved the adjournment. An unseemly wrangle arose lasting till after midnight. It was one against six hundred. But the Standing Orders then in vogue made the unit master of the situation. Any Member might interrupt the progress of questions by moving the adjournment. The new rules closely clip the wing of obstruction in this direction. No motion for the adjournment can now be made until all the questions are disposed of. Thereupon a Member may rise and "ask leave to move the adjournment, for the purpose of

discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance." The Speaker judges whether that description applies to the matter at issue. If not, there is an end of the matter. Leave to move is refused. If it be, the Speaker asks whether it is the pleasure of the House that leave be granted. If a quorum (forty) signify assent by rising, the demand is conceded. But the ordered business of the afternoon sitting is not disturbed. The motion must be made at a quarter-past eight o'clock in the same sitting.

Looking back over ancient Parliamentary records, it is interesting to note that up to the year 1642 the House of Commons sat at seven o'clock in the morning. In that year it was resolved to sit at eight. Twelve months later Spartan habits weakened, and the House met at nine. According to Standing Orders now in force, debate is peremptorily closed on the stroke of eleven o'clock. In 1647 the House agreed that "as soon as the clock strikes twelve the House shall rise." The difference between the severed centuries is that of noon and midnight. It was twelve o'clock at noon that the Long Parliament, having foregathered at nine in the morning, struck work. In the time of the Georges the hour of meeting grew as late as four o'clock in the afternoon. That arrangement prevailed up to the opening of the Session of 1888, when three o'clock was fixed for the opening hour. Under the latest Standing Orders the House meets every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at ten minutes to three, current debate being arbitrarily adjourned at 11 p.m. On Friday it meets at noon and adjourns at 5.30.

As a considerable proportion of Members, including some most to the fore, are engaged in private business during the day, meeting before three o'clock in the

afternoon seems prohibitive of their attendance. The rule unquestionably acts in that direction, the muster when the Speaker takes the Chair being scanty. But the drawback is more apparent than real. There are always at hand Members ready to sacrifice themselves by delivering speeches to empty benches. As these are unwound, Members busy in the City or in the Courts of Law have time to assemble and opportunity to take part in the debate and vote in the division.

The earlier hour of meeting has wrought a notable change in the fashion of attendance on the Treasury Bench. Ministers, having been at work in their offices through the morning, must needs, if questions be addressed to them, race down to the House after a hasty luncheon. As soon as they have read their reply they hurry off, either back to their offices or to their room in the House, in whose seclusion they continue their Ministerial work. In Disraeli's time, and so recently as Gladstone's second Administration, when questions were not called on till half-past four, Ministers completed their office work before coming down, and were at liberty to observe the unwritten law requiring the attendance of Ministers on the Treasury Bench throughout a debate, whether it interested their particular department or not. Only on rare occasions are there now found more than two or three Ministers on the Treasury Bench whilst debate is going forward.

The time-table of the sittings undoubtedly adds to the anxieties of the Ministerial Whips. The temptation to snatch a division in a nearly empty House is not infrequently superior to the virtue of the Opposition. The dangerous times are four o'clock and between 7.30 and nine o'clock, the first marking the opening of business; the second, the dinner hour. The Irish Members, having

at neither epoch pressing engagements outside the House, are invariably present in full force, and find irresistible the national impulse to vote against the Government.

The meeting of the House as early as 2.50 in the afternoon is well enough in the case of a Government with a majority over a hundred. In such circumstances it was established. The arrangement would have been impossible with such a majority as Mr. Gladstone found at his command after the General Election of 1892. Its maximum was forty. Its working strength during Lord Rosebery's Premiership dwindled away by one-half. After a brief struggle it was disposed of by a snap division taken after dinner. With the House meeting before three o'clock, its fate would have been accomplished some months earlier.

Another alteration as to the convenience of which diversity of opinion prevails, is the transposing of the peculiar circumstances of Wednesdays and Fridays. Up to 1902 the House, in accordance with ancient custom, met at noon on Wednesdays, adjourning not later than six o'clock. This was a welcome break in the labours of the week. It had masterful effect on the social amenities of London. Wednesday became the chief Parliamentary dining-out night, whether with private hosts or at public tables. Now the House sits on Wednesdays from 2.50 till eleven o'clock, meeting on Fridays at noon and not sitting after half-past five. This rearrangement was avowedly made in the interests of what, in a newly coined word, are known as week-enders. Friday now being, as Wednesday was, allotted to private Members, those not urgently concerned in the question at issue may make holiday from Parliamentary duties from Friday morning till Monday afternoon.

This is a privilege prized or deprecated according to

personal circumstances. Members who have country houses within easy access of London, and others who enjoy hotel life at the seaside, eagerly avail themselves of the opportunity. Members whose homes are too far distant to make it worth while repairing thither for a couple of days, regard the arrangement as frivolous, unworthy the dignity of a great deliberating assembly, traceable in its initiation directly to Mr. Balfour's guilty passion for golf. The arrangement has, however, come to stay. London society has readily adapted itself to the change. Friday has absolutely superseded Wednesday as the dining-out night and the gathering of political clans in the *salons* of the *grandes dames* of rival political camps.

Another controversial matter, personal rather than political in its bearing, is the season through which the Parliamentary Session runs. It seems, appropriately enough, midsummer madness to be imprisoned at Westminster through the days of June and July when the country is most inviting. It was not always thus. Up to a period so recent as 1832 Parliament assembled in December, made brief holiday at Christmas, and remained at work till the first week in June. The fourth day happening to be the King's birthday, loyal effort was made to honour it by proroguing. Seventeen years ago Sir George Trevelyan submitted a resolution insisting that Parliament should rise at the beginning of July, the time required for the due transaction of public business being provided by sitting longer in winter time. Lord Salisbury's colleagues in the House of Commons, attracted by the alluring proposal, resolved to make experiment in the direction of its recommendation.

The result was so disheartening that Parliament hurriedly returned to its later manner. Meeting on the

21st of November, 1890, it was not prorogued till about the usual time in the August of the following year. In the Session of 1903, Lord Newton carried in the House of Lords a resolution on the lines of Sir George Trevelyan's. But the matter is essentially one for the Commons. As far as it has declared opinion, it approves the proposal. Thirty-six years ago a Select Committee reported in favour of the change. All the same, Parliament habitually meets early in February, sits through the summer, and, save for Mr. Balfour's time limit of small talk in Committee of Supply, might be found at Westminster in September.

With respect to two reforms introduced by the Procedure Rules of 1902, the arrangement of the question hour and the disposal of private Bills, there is no divergence of opinion. Under both heads an appreciable saving of public time results. When Mr. Balfour proposed that the process of cross-examining Ministers should not extend beyond a period of forty minutes, lament was raised of outrage upon one of the most precious privileges of the private Member. Judging from long experience, it seemed impossible to compress the exercise within that time. Even when questions were no longer read it was no unusual thing for the performance to run over an hour and a half. The precise arrangement now existing is that on the first four days of the week questions are taken at three o'clock, the process terminating at a quarter to four. In the two years that have run since this arrangement was made, the number of occasions when the allotted time has not proved adequate to the task may be counted on the fingers of one hand.

A subsidiary arrangement, admirable in its working, divides questions into two classes. In one, where at

the instance of the Member concerned the question is starred, answer is made orally. In the other a printed answer is supplied and circulated with the Votes on the day following that for which the query is set down. At first Members fought shy of the second class. The cheapest and most effective method of advertisement for a pushful Member is to address a question to a Minister —to the Premier by preference, or, when he was still in office, to Mr. Chamberlain. The newspapers in town and country gratuitously circulated a report of his appearance on the scene in contiguity with the head of the Government. A Member to whom these considerations are important still insists on answer being made *viva voce*. The larger number, whose desire is bounded by honest intention to obtain information useful to the public or accommodating to a constituent, find the written answer has many conveniences. With the question appended, it is printed on a separate sheet of paper, of which the inquirer may obtain at the Vote Office as many copies as he pleases to distribute among those personally concerned. Nor is there any delay. On arriving at the House on the day for which his question is set down, he receives a copy of the Minister's answer, and this is thus even in advance in point of time of the Member who takes his turn at the oral inquisition.

The new rule has wrought wholesome effect upon the whole business of what is still called the question hour. A Member rising early at a time when the attendance is small, there is no temptation to make a scene by wrangling with the Minister. The Irish Members are still addicted to the old practice of putting a supplementary question "arising out of that answer." But the Speaker is watchful that due bounds shall not be exceeded, and

the depressing influence of the hour discourages enterprise. No honest inquirer after truth is a penny the worse for the new restriction, whilst the House is on the average daily half an hour to the good.

Up to the close of last century the tyranny of private business reached a point incredible to ordinary business people. The House meeting at three o'clock, public business did not in any case open till half-past three, what was left of the first half-hour after prayers being reserved for private business. But there was no time-limit to this transaction. Any private Bill agent might put down his clients' measure for any day of the week most convenient to himself and to them. There was no appeal from the choice. Public business of whatever magnitude must needs stand aside till a local Gas or Water Bill had been fought out. More than once it has happened that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, waiting to expound his Budget, has been blocked by a private Bill. It was no uncommon thing for a measure upon which local feeling was excited or large monetary transactions depended to be debated up to five or six o'clock. Thereafter, and then only, Ministers waiting to answer questions might take their turn, the Orders of the Day succeeding.

The Standing Order dealing with disorderly conduct was, five years ago, considerably strengthened. A Member having been "named" by the Speaker or Chairman of Committees for disregarding the authority of the Chair, or wilfully and persistently obstructing business, a Minister, the Leader of the House if he chances to be present, moves that such Member be suspended from the service of the House. Straightway the Speaker puts the question, and the House divides, no amendment, adjournment, or debate being allowed.

This was the last rule dealt with by the House before the debate was indefinitely adjourned. The result is very curious, and has apparently escaped the recollection of Ministers and the House. A subsection directed that the suspension on the first occasion should continue for one week, on the second occasion for a fortnight, and on the third or any subsequent occasion for a month. This penalty was found to be absurdly inadequate. An Irish Member, wanting a week's holiday without risking loss of a week's wage, had only to get himself named by the Speaker, and to the placid joys of his outing was added the enthusiastic applause of his constituents. It was proposed to make the penalty much more severe; to which end, on the 13th of February, 1902, particulars of the several terms of punishment were struck out of the clause, as a preliminary to enacting fresh penalties. Four days later, the House returned to consideration of the matter, the sitting being adjourned before it was settled. This 17th of February turned out to be the last occasion on which the new rules were debated. The consequence is that this important section of the penal clause remains comically truncated. It reads thus: "If any Member be suspended under this Order, his suspension on the first occasion——" Afterwards is silence, unbroken at this present time of writing.

As the rule now stands, without the controlling subsection, a Member suspended is sentenced for an indefinite time, certainly till the end of the existing Parliament. The difficulty arose in the case of Mr. John Dillon shortly afterwards presenting itself, and had to be met by a special resolution. Meanwhile, like the unfinished window in Aladdin's Tower, the rule remains a fragment, a flash of humour in the dull tome of Standing Orders.

Among the rules dealing with disorderly conduct is

one that has not yet been put in force. It directs that in the case of grave disorder arising in the House the Speaker may, if he think it necessary, adjourn the House without question put, or suspend any sitting for a time to be named by him. This is founded upon the custom in the French Legislative Chamber, where the President temporarily closes a noisy sitting by putting on his hat. When the new rule was accepted, Members obviously had in mind the memorable scene during the committee stage of the Home Rule Bill, when a free fight took place on the floor of the House. The difficulty that suggests itself is whether upon that particular occasion the Speaker's voice could have been heard above the tumult, and whether his quittance of the Chair would have had any appreciable effect upon the scene. For a certain period gentlemen above the Gangway on the Opposition side were on the historic occasion alluded to so earnestly engaged upon the task of pommelling each other in the avowed interests of free speech that they were not in a position to notice when the Speaker's Chair was empty or occupied. As it happened, the outbreak occurred in Committee, and when, after considerable interval, the Speaker appeared on the scene, party passion was stilled.

A reform of procedure the House of Commons has frequently coquetted with is the carrying over of unfinished Bills to the next Session. It seems a preposterous thing that a body of business men should occupy themselves through weeks, even months, of a Session in framing a measure of legislation, and see their labour lost by the arbitrary interference of a particular date. In Congress at Washington, where legislative work is conducted on strictly business principles, Bills dropped in one Session are taken up in the next, at the

point achieved, and carried forward to the end. It is the same in France, Spain, Belgium, Austria-Hungary, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Greece, and even Portugal. The only legislative chambers that in this respect follow the British method are those of Germany and Italy.

In 1890, Mr. W. H. Smith, with the enthusiasm of a convert, attempted to draft this proposal on his already far-reaching scheme of reform of procedure. He laid on the table a new Standing Order authorising the carrying-over of Bills left unfinished at the close of a Session. Gladstone, then leading the Opposition, objected to so grave a change in the usage of Parliament and the practice of the Constitution, before the matter had been carefully examined by a Select Committee. Such a Committee was appointed, with the result that the majority approved the proposal. Gladstone, his innate ineradicable Conservatism touched, presented a draft report showing that similar proposals had been under the consideration of the House for forty years, and in every instance, in every shape, had been universally condemned. The same argument might, of course, have been used against the introduction of the Home Rule Bill of 1893.

This powerful, though individual, opposition prevailed. The majority report was signed and circulated, but no attempt was made to frame and pass a Standing Order. It is interesting to note that not only was Mr. Balfour among the majority of the Committee favourable to reform, but he wrote the report, an able, convincing document. When, twelve years later, having risen to the position of Leader of the House, he introduced a scheme of procedure reform, he did not include this particular proposal. I venture to predict that the

day is not far distant when it will be incorporated in Standing Orders. Save a feeling of reverence for the antique, there is nothing to be said in support of procedure that every Session leads to prodigious waste of time.

Another evil in Parliamentary procedure crying aloud for intervention of the reforming hand is the inordinate length of speechmaking. There are exceedingly few men whose information is so wide, whose counsel so sage, whose eloquence so alluring, that the House would willingly hear them beyond the space of half an hour. Save in the matter of explaining an intricate Bill or expounding a Budget, twenty minutes is the full limit to which speech should obtrude on debate. Mr. Asquith, admitted on both sides to be one of the most effective debaters in the present Parliament, rarely exceeds half an hour when taking prominent part in critical debate. But every sentence tells. Whereas a man of less intellectual capacity and dialectical skill goes mooning round to find the right word and the most effective manner of introducing it.

(2) Washington.

Probably the first impression conveyed to the mind of a visitor to the Strangers' Gallery in the House of Commons is one of surprise at the smallness of the Chamber. Is this the House redolent with memories of Pitt and Fox, where but yesterday Disraeli and Gladstone faced each other across "the substantial piece of furniture,"—the table to wit—which on a historic occasion Dizzy thanked Heaven stood between him and Gladstone in the prime and passion of his manhood?

Well, not exactly. Pitt and Fox never sat in the present House of Commons. But the case is made

stronger by the fact that the old House, destroyed by fire seventy years ago, was even less commodious. It is one of the flashes of that British humour of the existence of which Americans profess incredulity, that having to provide sitting room for six hundred and seventy Members the House of Commons was built with seats for three hundred and six. The Americans, always subservient to business principles, provide not only a seat for every Member of Congress up to the maximum number, but add a desk amply furnished with accessories. Moreover, the chair is not one of your straight-backed, stiff, hard contrivances. It is a comfortable rocker set on a pivot, a plan that enables a Representative of contemplative mind slowly to revolve, viewing the situation from all points of view. One hundred and thirty-nine feet long, ninety-three feet wide, and thirty-eight feet high, the Hall of Representatives, to quote its official designation, provides desks for three hundred and fifty-two Members and four Delegates.

Naturally in a country based on democratic principles the antique, occasionally grotesque, tyranny that guards the sacred precincts of the British Parliament against the offending foot of a class some forty-three millions strong, haughtily known as "Strangers," is non-existent. As a matter of fact by far the larger area of the Hall of Representatives at Washington is devoted to the convenience of the public. The spacious galleries that, facing the Chair, half encircle the Chamber find room for not less than 2,500 citizens. Ladies have their especial and favoured seats and are at liberty to make room beside them for brothers, cousins, or even husbands. There is no *grille*, nor necessity on the part of male or female to go a-begging for orders of admission,

except of course to special places such as that reserved for the Diplomatic Corps, where, by the way, I, though not officially representing any European nation, was by favour of the Secretary of State free during my stay in Washington. When, as on the opening day of the new Congress, the galleries are crowded chiefly with ladies dressed all in their best, every desk on the floor of the house occupied, the scene presented is one of rare animation. I am bound to admit that in respect of acoustical properties the less spacious House of Commons is preferable. The Gentleman from Ohio or the Gentleman from Alabama rising to speak from the benches to the right of the Chair might as well be, as far as occupants of the Diplomatic Gallery are concerned, each in his native State.

Political parties in Congress are divided into two camps, the Republican and the Democratic. A comparatively modern institution, Congress has not attained the delicacy of distinction marked in the House of Commons by sitting "above" or "below" the gangway. Nor has it yet developed a dissentient Democratic Party or a section of Free Food Republicans. Each political party has its leader. But they do not sit opposite each other, affording the House opportunity, treasured on the banks of the Thames, of observing their countenances and gestures throughout recurrent Parliamentary crises. They have no distinctive seats, corner or otherwise, such as are cherished at Westminster.

This observation leads to another point of distinction between Congress and the House of Commons which largely detracts from the dramatic attributes of the former. Since Ministers do not sit in the House there is no Treasury Bench or Front Opposition Bench on which

attention is focussed. Inevitably it follows that there is no Question hour, frequently the liveliest, most important episode in a long sitting at Westminster. It would be vain to offer an opinion as to whether this is an advantage or otherwise from a national point of view. From a business point of view the American system is distinctly preferable. Like the quality of mercy it is twice blessed. It relieves an overworked Minister from the necessity of quitting his office in the middle of the working day, having spent an appreciable portion of the morning in drafting in reply to an embarrassing question an answer that, whilst apparently full, shall be as empty as possible of information. On the other hand it enables the legislative assembly to get to its business forthwith free from the obligation to devote the first forty minutes of its sitting to a process of cross-examination more or less designedly provocative. Congressmen are not wholly debarred from satisfying legitimate curiosity with respect to procedure in the executive departments of the State. But enquiry and reply are submitted in writing, and there being no opportunity of cheap advertisement such as is provided by the Question hour in the House of Commons, patriotic curiosity subsides in marvellous fashion.

Fundamental difference between the House of Commons and Congress is found in the relative positions of the Speakers. The Speaker in Congress is a political personage of avowedly partisan type. It is true that the Chair of the House of Commons is among the spoils of the victors at a General Election. When a Member of the House is for the first time inducted into the Chair he is carried thither by the majority of the political party to which he belongs. Once seated in the Chair ancient political impulses and influences have no

longer part in his life. He becomes absolutely a piece of judicial machinery, bent solely upon conducting in orderly fashion the daily business of the House. How absolute is the transformation wrought appears from the fact that the Speaker is habitually re-elected when the chances of war at the poll have brought disaster to his quondam political friends, placing the Opposition in power.

On the retirement of Mr. Peel in the Spring of 1895 the Liberals, then in power, put forward Mr. Gully as candidate for the Chair, the Irish Members, perceiving their opportunity of paying off old scores, joining forces with the Conservative Opposition who had a candidate in the person of Sir Matthew White Ridley. Not that they had any personal objection to Mr. Gully. But here was a chance of kicking over the Chair, emblem of that authority they were openly pledged to belittle. The result of this coalition was that Mr. Gully's election was carried by the narrow majority of eleven. A few months later the Liberals being routed at the poll the Unionist Party was returned with a majority that made it absolute master of the destinies of the Chair. Mr. Gully was re-elected without dissent, an honour renewed when in 1900 another Parliament was elected confirming the right of the Unionist Party to do what they liked with the Chair.

In Congress the Speaker is not only the nominee of his political party but in spite of his judicial position he remains its head. As representing the dominant Party he most nearly approaches the position of Leader of the House filled at the present time in the Commons by the Prime Minister. The Speaker has in truth more personal power in Congress than the Premier has in the House of Commons. The work of Congress is systematically

devolved upon Standing Committees. Every proposal of legislation, from whomsoever emanating, must be referred to one or other of these Committees. There are some threescore of them, varying in number of members from five to seventeen. It is the Speaker who not only personally nominates these Committees but drafts the terms of reference. As in the House of Commons, a majority of the Committee is selected from the ranks of the dominant party. The majority naturally elects the Chairman, who with the Chairmen of the other Committees forms a sort of council which, under the presidency of the Speaker, manages the whole business of the House and the legislation of the year. Hence it will appear that in a free and independent nation there exists an autocratic control of the legislature such as would not be permitted to exist for a week at Westminster.

In matters of ordered procedure there are some distinctive differences between the two Parliaments separated by the Atlantic. Both Senate and Congress meet through the Session at noon. They rarely sit beyond dusk though towards the close of a Session obstruction is occasionally responsible for all-night sittings. In the Senate as in the House of Lords the rules governing debate are far more lax than in Congress. In the latter House there is a rule limiting to one hour the duration of speeches. In Committee of the whole House speeches are limited to five minutes, a regulation upon which those familiar with procedure in the British House of Commons look with longing eye. In the Senate, free from the tyranny of such rules, speeches may be carried to any length. When the Panama Treaty came before the Senate for ratification Senator Morgan successfully opposed it in a speech of several

days duration. Mr. Biggar made his first mark in the House of Commons by a speech that occupied four hours in delivery. It consisted chiefly of extracts from a Blue Book. But the Member for Cavan's achievement was feeble compared with that of the Senator from Alabama. On the third day of his rising in an almost empty House he, with comprehensive sweep of his hand over the pile of books by which he stood in laager, blandly observed, "I wish to read a few volumes in support of my claim." As Gladstone said when his Reform Bill was defeated, "Time is on our side." Time was on the side of Senator Morgan. The end of the Session being close at hand when he opened his speech, he triumphed to the extent that it was necessary to summon an extra Session in which, grimly silent, he saw the treaty ratified.

In Congress the severity of the rule limiting duration of speeches is modified by the existence of the *Congressional Record*. A member having completed his hour's exhortation, or being abruptly pulled up in Committee on the five minutes rule, may ask permission to "extend" his remarks. If this petition involved the meaning borne on its face it would of course be met by a stern negative. It is, however, merely a delicate way of soliciting authority for printing in the *Record* the continuation and conclusion of the Member's speech. Consent must be unanimous. But as the Members present do not incur any pecuniary responsibility in the printing of the speech or suffer obligation to read the printed matter, consent is rarely withheld. The United States are wealthy. A few dollars added to the national printing bill are not worth consideration in comparison with the hurt feelings of the Member whose valued remarks have been cut short.

Each Senator is entitled, free of charge, to eighty-eight copies of the daily issue of the *Record*, Members of Congress being perforce content with three-score. Thus are they enabled to cheer the domestic hearth, and delight a wider range of personal friends with opportunity of studying their eloquence in verbatim form. Something over £41,000 a year is paid by a grateful country for enjoyment of this intellectual luxury. It is money well expended, as making possible the existence of a rule of Spartan simplicity and severity that accelerates the wheels of the legislative machine. It would be a small price to pay for the accomplishment of similar result in the House of Commons.

The effect of Senator Morgan's obstructive opposition to the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty was considerably minimised by the operation of a rule of procedure foreign to the practice of the House of Commons. In Congress business introduced in one Session and left unfinished at the time of adjournment is taken in hand in the succeeding Session of the same Congress. This is a common-sense proposal that has many advocates in the British Parliament. With us the greater part of the Session may have been devoted to the moulding of an important measure dropped in the last day of the Session for lack of time to carry it over the narrow strip of ground remaining.

The Bill if brought in again the following Session must pass through all its stages as if it were a project quite new to the House. This is a stipulation so obviously absurd that effort has frequently been made to amend it. It is difficult to defend. But there it is, there it has been from time immemorial, and there, says the House, fanatically Conservative where its ancient procedure is concerned, it must remain.

Privileged to be present at the opening of a Session of Congress in which the election of a Speaker was a leading incident, I was struck by the contrast between the two Legislatures. With us the election of a new Speaker, more especially if it be contested, is an incident of dramatic interest, its progress marked by ceremonial that goes back to Stuart times. In Congress the election was accomplished with that absence of fuss and strict attention to simple business principles that mark its whole procedure. As with us in the temporary non-existence of a Speaker, the Clerk of the House directed preliminary affairs. The Clerk of the House of Commons is however in analogous circumstances so weighed down by sense of his own infirmity, not being a duly elected Member, that he is literally speechless. When the moment comes for the mover and seconder of the resolution proposing election of a Speaker to rise, the Clerk, nominally presiding, might be expected to call upon them by name. Not he, under pain of the penalties of the Clock Tower. Pen in hand he dumbly points in turn to the mover and seconder who, obeying the signal, rise. In Congress the Clerk, who by the way bears military rank as a Major, is quite chirpy, volubly directing affairs with an air of authority that could not be more commanding if he were the Speaker himself.

Prayers having been said by a white-haired blind chaplain, the roll of Congress was called in the alphabetical order of States. This done the Clerk, cheerily rapping the table with what looks like an auctioneer's hammer, called upon "the Gentleman from Iowa" or other as arranged. The Member, in a brief speech, proposed Mr. Joseph Cannon as Speaker. The name evidently struck Members with a note of unfamiliarity. For twenty years the Honourable Joseph G. Cannon of

Illinois has been known at Washington as "Uncle Joe." It was however admitted that on this state occasion a certain measure of etiquette must be observed. So without audible protest the Speaker nominate was alluded to as Mr. Cannon. He was the candidate of the Republican Party returned by overwhelming majority. The Opposition, undaunted, put up their man, and without more ado Congress divided.

This is a process entirely different from that observed at Westminster. Members called upon by name responded with cry of "Cannon" or "Williams" according to their political preference. One of the clerks at the table ticked off a vote, with the result that Mr. Cannon was found to have 198 votes against 166 recorded for Mr. Williams.

The process occupied twenty minutes, which in point of time compares unfavourably with a House of Commons division, whereby a muster considerably larger than that voting in Congress can record their votes in from twelve to fifteen minutes. The system at Westminster has the further advantage of introducing a wholesome break in the proceedings, giving wearied Members a healthful trot round the Lobbies. It is direfully monotonous to sit and listen to the Clerk calling out three hundred and sixty-four names, to which comes the monotonous response "Cannon!" or "Williams!"

The election decided, the oldest Member was despatched in search of the new Speaker, modestly lurking in the Lobby. When found he entered leaning on the arm of his introducer, Members of both political parties upstanding to receive him. Then followed a pretty incident. The Leader of the Opposition, who had made counter proposition in the election proceedings, advanced, conducted the new Speaker to the Chair, and pronounced brief but hearty eulogy. This led to a

demonstration unfamiliar in the House of Commons. In that assembly the incident would have been recorded by deep-chested notes of "Hear, hear." In Congress, Members when they desire to express pleasure clap their hands like the little hills familiar to the Psalmist.

The Speaker having made acknowledgment of the honour done him the process of swearing in was commenced and rapidly accomplished. Herein, in respect of getting through what is after all a formal business, Congress has the advantage. The swearing-in of a new House of Commons is a performance that occupies several days of a Session. Rows of tables are set out in the middle of the floor, Bibles are scrambled for and groups of from ten to fifteen are worked off with more or less celerity and despatch. Swearing-in Members of Congress is a simpler procedure and is more decently accomplished. The first Member to undergo the process was the Speaker. Standing on the white marble dais on which his unadorned chair is placed the Speaker uplifted his right hand whilst the oldest Member recited the terms of the oath. There was no kissing the book, nor repetition of the oath by the newly elected Member. His hand uplifted signified acquiescence. The Speaker sworn in, Members were called again in the alphabetical order of their States. Filling the space before the table, hands were uplifted, the oath was read, the group disappeared and another took its place. It was all over in half an hour, and the Speaker rapping the table with the auctioneer's hammer, a size larger than that used by the Clerk, the business of the special Session of the fifty-eighth Congress of the United States was forthwith entered upon.

The distinctive note of a sitting of Congress is its simple, severe business intention. As we have seen in

connection with the election of a new Speaker, there is no pomp of ceremony, no procession of the Speaker arrayed in wig and gown escorted to and from the Chair by the Serjeant-at-Arms carrying shoulder high the Mace. As far as personal appearance is concerned the Speaker of Congress is differentiated from unofficial Members only by the fact that his chair is set by itself on a marble platform slightly raised, and he more or less conceals about his person an austere manner.

One little human weakness displayed on the occasion of the opening of a new Congress is perhaps due directly to domestic impulses. Some years ago the head of a family having been elected to a seat in Congress, it occurred to the daughters of his household that it would be nice to place on his desk a bouquet of flowers. There was about the proceeding something sweetly reminiscent of bridal custom in other associations. The practice took on at once, grew into a custom, and has in this twentieth century assumed proportions embarrassing to the pages in attendance and the progress of public business. Looking down from the Diplomatic Gallery to the corridor behind the Speaker's Chair I caught glimpses of what seemed a flower garden. These were the bouquets committed to the charge of the pages who awaited opportunity of bringing them in. They came with a rush as soon as seats had been drawn and occupied. Carnival seemed to have come to Washington. Some Congressmen sat blushing behind bouquets piled chin high on the desk before them.

It was a scene upon which "Uncle Joe" might be supposed to have looked with the friendly eye of a family man. Avuncular instincts, well enough in the case of a private Member, are unsuitable for full display in the Speaker's Chair. After watching the tumult for

a while the Speaker rose and, whacking the Table with forbidding hammer, decreed that no more flowers should be brought in. The ladies in the galleries opposite, many of whom had bestowed thought and money on bouquets for husband or father, looked as if conviction were forced upon them that they had been mistaken in their original estimate of "Uncle Joe."

The process of securing seats is more primitive than that which prevails at Westminster. In the House of Commons attendance at prayer time is a necessary condition of securing a desirable seat. In Congress the ballot box is brought into requisition. A page is blindfolded and dipping his hand into the box draws forth a number corresponding with the name of a particular Member. A seat thus appropriated belongs to the Member for the rest of the Session, and there the pother ends.

This is a small matter in connection with which the Mother of Parliaments might well take a lesson from her eldest and most vigorous daughter.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW HOUSE FOR THE COMMONS.

FROM time to time there is much heard in Parliament of congested districts in Ireland and elsewhere. The most hopelessly congested district at the present time is enclosed by the walls of the Palace at Westminster. The result of the General Election of 1906 was to send to Parliament 429 Ministerialists faced by an Opposition of 158. Happily in the circumstances the 83 Nationalists who complete the tale of Parliamentary representation do not come into consideration. Twenty-five years ago, Gladstone being returned to power at the head of what in those days was reckoned an overwhelming majority, they resolved to indicate their independence of British political parties by retaining their old places to the left of the Speaker. Ministers might come and Ministers go; they would sit on for ever below the gangway to the left of the Speaker. Had it been otherwise, the present condition of things in the House would have been even more appalling than it is. With the assistance of Mr. Keir Hardie's following among Labour Members, the Irish Members pretty well appropriate the whole of the benches below the gangway on the Opposition side, thus relieving the strain on the Ministerial side to the extent of over 100 seats.

There still remains the problem of seating 400 Ministerialists in an area assigned for a moiety of the assembly.

In ordinary conditions, when political force is more equally divided, the accommodation is hopelessly insufficient to the demands made upon it. It is almost incredible, but actually true, that when the present House was built with full knowledge that it had to accommodate 670 Members, sitting room was provided for 306. It is true that in the side galleries which flank the Chamber room was made for an additional 122. It is also the fact, though not generally recognised, that the galleries are technically within the House. Any Member who succeeded in catching the Speaker's eye might thence address the House with the same freedom as is exercised when he is called upon to rise from his seat on the floor.

There is an historical occasion when the privilege was asserted. It happened at the opening of the first Session of the Parliament of 1880-5. Then, as now, the Ministerial majority, composed largely of new men, were insatiable in attendance on their novel duties. They were down punctually at prayer time, and when late comers strolled in during Questions they found every seat taken. Some of the older Parliamentary hands practised a little manœuvre at the expense of new Members. Seats are secured for the current sitting by inserting in the brass framework at the back tickets obtainable only at prayer time. The rigor of this ordinance is modified by a custom generally observed of Members placing their hats before prayer time on a coveted seat. This was regarded as equivalent to pegging out a claim, and the hat was left undisturbed till tickets were obtainable. The presumption was that the claimant was actually in personal attendance, waiting in the Library or newspaper room till the bell rang announcing that the Speaker had taken the Chair. The

knowing ones kept a surplus hat in their locker and, having secured a seat with the help of one, shamelessly went forth under the other to drive in the Park or go about their ordinary business.

It was this conspiracy Mr. Mitchell Henry, speaking from the side gallery in 1880, disclosed to a shocked House. It illustrates the devices to which Members were put owing to inadequate accommodation. The present Parliament, still young, has seen much manœuvring for place. On the eve of the opening day a crowd of Members filled the dimly lighted Lobby, waiting till midnight should boom from Big Ben and the doors of the House open. Even midway in its course, the novelty of the thing having worn off, Members suffer extreme personal inconvenience in the effort to procure a seat on particular occasions. The introduction of the Home Rule Bill of 1893 led to some notable scenes. It was a smoking room story, of course exaggerated, that Mr. Austen Chamberlain, unconscious of the coming dignity of Chancellor of the Exchequer, arrived at the House at midnight on February 12th in a four-wheeler otherwise loaded with top hats. Certainly his colleagues in the Liberal Unionist Party who then sat below the gangway on the Ministerial side were observed to be exceptionally lucky in the race for seats.

The introduction of the momentous Bill was imperilled by threat of the intervention of a question of privilege arising out of the general *melée*. Mr. Wallace, Member for Limehouse, had, by taking thought, procured the much prized corner seat below the gangway on the Opposition side. Early in the morning he asserted ownership in the customary way by leaving his hat on it. Colonel Saunderson, otherwise unprovided for,

made for the coign of vantage. The rightful owner resisting his claim, the Colonel dropped into the seat, the fact that Mr. Wallace's hat was on it at the moment not mattering. A struggle ensued, resulting in the Member for Limehouse being laid prostrate on the floor. Another Irish Member, a Nationalist this time, secured three seats at one blow by taking off his coat and spreading it full length on the Bench.

These incidents have their comic aspect; they indicate a really serious state of things. It is a remarkable fact that with the largest number of Members of any legislative assembly the House of Commons has the smallest seating arrangements. To the Paris Chamber, including Ministers, there are returned some 300 Members for whom 372 seats are provided. As we have seen, the House of Commons now numbered 670 Members, seats (galleries included) 428. A glance at some of the principal legislative chambers will be interesting by comparison with our own. I may premise that the present House of Commons has a total area of 1,127 square feet. In addition to the 428 seats for Members there is accommodation for something under 300 strangers, including Peers, Diplomatists, ladies, and officials.

The Paris chamber is semi-circular in form, about 100 feet in diameter. Eighteen marble columns divide it into bays. There are eight tiers of seats divided by seventeen gangways. A desk with lock and key is provided for every Member. The tribune, whither Members repair when primed with speech, occupies the centre of the semi-circle, being raised some three feet above the level of the floor. Behind the orator's tribune is the President's Chair. A speaker accustomed to the tribune and careful of his position, is fairly well

heard. The Reichstag is arranged pretty much in the same plan. The orator has a tribune before the Presidential Chair, the reporters seated at a table immediately before him. Ministers in semi-circular seats facing the tribune, Members, 460 in all, being on benches to the right and left. It is not a very good place to speak in, owing to its oblong form and the position of the rostrum set midway down its length. In Florence Senators are lodged in the Palace Uffizzi, in what was originally the theatre when built by Vasari in 1560. The Deputies are housed in the neighbouring Palazzo Vecchia. It was built for the popular Council Savanarola dreamt of at the end of the fifteenth century. It is beautiful to look upon; but as far as acoustical properties are concerned it is worse than our House of Lords.

The Hall of Representatives at Washington is 93 feet × 139 feet. As naturally becomes a free country, it was built largely with a view to accommodating the public. Seats are provided for 1,312 persons, the odd thousand being the public who are at liberty to enter without those formularies which hamper the stranger in the House of Commons. Chairs and desks are arranged in a semi-circle; there is no rostrum, Members, as in our House, speaking from their places. In so vast a hall the difficulty of the voice filling it is insuperable.

In the Reichsrath at Vienna, as in Paris, each Deputy has assigned to him a private desk. In turbulent times during recent Sessions these have played a prominent part in Parliamentary debate. Other methods of obstruction in this lively assembly growing stale, it occurred to an ingenious deputy that the lid of his desk might be put to useful purposes. Accordingly, when

any gentlemen of contrary opinion and any Minister whatsoever was on his legs, he lifted the lid of his desk to fullest range and brought it down with a bang. By sedulous practice he was able to make the consequent noise almost incessant. The device took on, and is now in common practice with the Opposition. The House of Commons has, of course, no parallel advantage. When objection was taken to Mr. Alfred Lyttelton answering questions on Chinese Labour addressed directly to the Premier, the Opposition yelled unintermittently for an hour, thus preventing the Colonial Secretary advancing beyond the opening words of his intended speech. A few desk lids manipulated on the Hungarian principle would, on that historic occasion, have proved exceedingly useful.

The Belgian Chambers are on the model of the French, but are much smaller. That has, however, not the corresponding advantage of improving the acoustic qualities. It is exceedingly difficult to hear, even on the floor of the House, whilst in the galleries allotted to strangers it is in the main impossible.

Whilst the House of Commons is less spacious and less ornate in decoration than others in either hemisphere it is of all the most admirably equipped in the matter of acoustics. There are, indeed, few buildings of its capacity that approach its perfectness in this respect. It was not always so. The House, as originally designed, was in this respect quite as bad as the House of Lords remains. When, seventy years ago, the Palace at Westminster was projected, it was determined to have a magnificent pile of buildings, worthy the historic site and the Mother of Parliaments. There was no stint of money. Incidentally accommodation was to be provided for the occasional assembly

of a number of gentlemen forming the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Mr. Charles Barry, assisted by Mr. Pugin, enthusiastically entered into the idea and carried it out in a fashion that added lustre to his name. When the work was finished it was admitted that the building was radiant in beauty without and discovery easily made it clear that within it bristled with inconveniences. The chambers severally devoted to the deliberations of the House of Lords and House of Commons were especially charming in the beauty of their proportion and in the perfection of their design. In fact, they left only one thing to be desired—the possibility of a Member addressing either House being heard by the listening senate.

In the House of Lords, where perhaps this is on the whole not a matter of prime importance, acoustics were sacrificed to architecture, and the chamber remains to this day in the solemn detail designed by Mr. Barry. Of the coroneted host there are not more than twenty who can make themselves distinctly heard, even within the limits of the red leather benches. In the Press Gallery debate can be reported only by a system of collaboration. Groups of reporters transcribing then sit together, each contributing his quota of sentences here and there sufficiently well heard to have been taken down in shorthand. It fortunately happens that among the few peers who are audible are the men whose words the nation would not willingly let die. Lord Beaconsfield, shifting his quarters, found to his pleased surprise that he was as easily heard in the Lords as Mr. Disraeli had been in the Commons. Towards the end of his career the late Lord Salisbury fell into a habit of bowing his massive head and confiding the concluding words of

an important sentence to the privacy of his chest. At his best he was clearly heard, as are Lord Rosebery, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Halsbury at the present day. The new Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn, has successfully passed through the critical ordeal.

Whilst the Lords accepted the situation as they found it, Members of the more utilitarian House of Commons insisted upon the necessity, at least the desirability, of their speeches being heard. The defect in the Chamber was unerringly traced to the lofty ceiling with its delicate stone fascia, its noble arches, and its dark recesses in which the human voice buried itself, giving up the ghost among inarticulate rumbling. Few who sit in the House of Commons to-day and look up at the glass ceiling illumined at night by a galaxy of gas-jets dream that it is the tombstone of a roof upon which Mr. Barry lavished the tenderest care, the most consummate art. Yet such is the fact. Members with rude persistence insisted upon their speeches reaching the ear of their audience, especially that portion seated in the Press Gallery. The controversy lapsed into the alternative of speeches or roof. In the end the roof was sacrificed. The glass ceiling was hung low beneath it with the result that the new House of Commons admittedly rivalled in acoustic qualities the renown of the temporary House built on the destruction by fire of the older palace whose superexcellence was hymned by old Members.

To those familiar with the comfortable, in some cases luxuriant, arrangement existing to-day in the way of private rooms for Ministers having seats in the House of Commons it will appear incredible that when the Palace at Westminster was handed over for legislative purposes discovery was made that Ministers charged

with conduct of affairs of the State had no private apartments within the building. In course of time two rooms were made available, one allotted to the Law Officers of the Crown, the other to the Ministerial Whip. Neither the Premier nor the Leader of the Opposition had a private room. I have heard the late Mr. Childers tell how during the early years of his Ministerial life, first at the Admiralty, next at the Treasury, he had no retiring room. Boxes of papers sent on from the Treasury were constantly arriving for his consideration. His only resort was to seat himself at one of the tables in the Division Lobby where he found himself in company with other distraught colleagues.

Additions to the rooms allotted to Ministerial purposes were made from time to time, but it is only within the last dozen years that the demand has been fully met. To-day not only every Secretary of State but every Under-Secretary has his private room, some, notably those of the Leader of the House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Irish Secretary, being commodious, even luxurious. In those days the Ministerial Whips were located in a small dungeon leading out of the Lobby in the corner now appropriated by the Post Office.* The Opposition Whips had no room at all, being obliged to take counsel together and hatch plots in quiet corners of the corridors.

As to the gentlemen of the Press, their condition was pitiable. For many years the only accommodation for writing out reports was the ante-room to the Gallery, now chiefly occupied by telegraph operators. By a low narrow passage still extant, it led into the sole refreshment room, an apartment 22 feet long by something less than 10 feet wide, running to a height of 8 feet,

6 inches. Here was throned old Wright with his store of cold roast beef and cold knuckle of ham, slices of which he by long practice and the bestowal of much thought was able to cut of superhuman thinness. There was an uneasy apprehension in the minds of his customers that these *pièces de résistance* brought down afresh every Monday morning were conveyed in the red pocket handkerchief with which Wright used to mop his honest brow after wrestling with ultimate yield of the ham knuckle. If, in these more enlightened days, any manufacturer were to condemn his workpeople to labour in such a place he would bring himself under the notice of the factory inspector. Forty years ago this black hole was thought amply sufficient for the accommodation of representatives of the Press who, according to the letter of the law, had no business within the precincts of the House.

In 1867 a Select Committee was appointed to consider the whole arrangements of the House of Commons with a view to enabling a greater number of Members to take part in the proceedings. They were also instructed to consider how better accommodation might be provided within the precincts of the House for the transaction of departmental business by Ministers.

The provision of cosy retiring rooms for Ministers had an undesigned but important influence on the conduct of debate. Disraeli was not only at his post on the Treasury Bench practically from the time the Speaker took the Chair to the adjournment of the sitting, but insisted that his example should be followed by his colleagues. Gladstone, when in office, habitually observed the same rule. With the Ministry over which Mr. Balfour presided it was a daily habit, not least scrupulously observed by the Leader of the House,

that, as soon as questions were over, they disappeared, leaving the colleague concerned in the business immediately under consideration sole tenant of the Treasury Bench. This was a practice which occasionally led to some embarrassment and was frequently protested against by those punctilious advocates of order, the Irish Members. Comparison of custom in this respect is greatly to the credit of the earlier race of Ministers. It must be admitted that, in some cases, they may have remained hour after hour on the Treasury Bench for the sufficient reason that, if they quitted it, they had nowhere else to go.

In his evidence given before the Select Committee of 1867 Mr. Ward Hunt contributed a graphic, pathetic account of the troubles of a Minister. It was in his time, as now, inevitable that the transaction of departmental business should lap over into the time of the sitting of the House. "At present," said Mr. Hunt to the sympathetic Committee, "you have the choice of two things. One is to go into the Library, the other to sit in the Lobby. If you sit in the Lobby you incommode persons wishing to write letters. You take up a much greater space than can be afforded, as your boxes and papers occupy the room of two or three persons. If you should happen to be engaged in doing something which requires all the thought and attention you can give to it, the chances are that somebody comes up and speaks to you about something that has nothing to do with the matter in hand. Then perhaps a division is called and you have to leave all your papers lying about. I believe you can so leave them with perfect confidence. Still, a highly sensitive person might object to leaving his papers lying about in that way. If you go to the Library you are not within reach, supposing you are urgently wanted."

Mr. Ward Hunt's lament did not end here. Old Members will recall his gigantic physical proportions which, in the hunt for seats, weighed heavily upon him, and others. Members of the average proportions who constitute His Majesty's present Ministry cannot find room on the Treasury Bench when they are fully mustered. It is quite a common thing to see one seated on the Gangway steps below the Treasury Bench. Forty years ago Mr. Ward Hunt poured his plaint into the ears of the Committee. "During this Session," he said, "I have stood for hours unable to get a seat. For a long time it has happened every evening that, having to answer questions, I have been obliged to stand behind the Speaker's Chair till the questions are put. I frequently have to ask some Member of the Government, sometimes a Cabinet Minister, to allow me to take his place in order to answer questions."

Members of King Edward VII.'s Ministry who dwell in their private rooms at ease will study with interest these experiences of the Financial Secretary of the Treasury in Disraeli's day.

That the Chamber was in size insufficient for the purposes to which it is dedicated was commonly agreed. The Committee fought shy of going the full length of recommending the building of a new House, and laboriously considered various expedients for extending the area of the existing one. An idea well received pointed to desired enlargement being gained by taking down the walls which divide the House from the Division Lobbies, throwing the additional space into the Legislative Chamber. The hunt in that direction was abandoned on discovery that the roof was supported upon the inner walls. Another scheme submitted provided that the walls behind the Speaker's Chair at one

end, backing the chair of the Serjeant-at-arms at the other, should be removed and the House lengthened. This would give an additional hundred seats, but whether they would be of any practical use to Members desiring to hear or to join in debate was doubtful. A necessary condition of adopting this plan was that the Speaker's Chair should be set midway down the length of the Chamber, as is the case in the House of Representatives at Washington.

Mr. Bazley, later Sir Thomas, a long-esteemed Member for Manchester, being in church one Sabbath morning, was struck by a happy idea. He took note of the galleries extending laterally and opposite the pulpit nearly doubling the seating capacity of the edifice. Why should not the House of Commons adopt the idea? Above the Division Lobbies which run round the House of Commons level with its floor is a corresponding range at the height of the side galleries in the House itself. Mr. Bazley's idea was to take in these upper lobbies, extending the galleries backward till they reached the outer hall. He was bowled out by Lord Elcho, who pointed out that such an arrangement was all very well in a church where the preacher had the advantage of the height of his pulpit, but it would never do in a chamber where Members addressing the House stood up from their places on the floor.

The Committee sat only three weeks, making no report, but printing the interesting evidence accumulated and recommending their reappointment in the ensuing Session. Among the new witnesses called was Professor Tyndall, an expert in acoustics. He was chiefly examined with respect to the possibility of conditions of the House of Commons in that respect. Amongst the mysteries hidden from the eye of strangers in the

gallery, probably not familiar to new Members, is the floor of the House. Covered with string matting, it appears to be of the ordinary character. It is actually constructed of perforated ironwork designed for the purpose of ventilation, fresh air coming up from the cavernous cellars below. Some authorities were of opinion that this was responsible for any imperfection that might be noted in the acoustic qualities of the chamber. They insisted that there was added to the visible room within the four walls of the House the space in the ventilating chambers below, practically doubling the area a voice commanded. Professor Tyndall was of opinion that there was nothing in the objection. Asked to state what is the best shape acoustically for a chamber set apart for public speaking he drew on a piece of paper a simple design.

"The best shape acoustically," he said, handing in the scrap of paper, "would be something of this kind; a room of four sides with the Speaker where the dot is."

The rough plan, it must be admitted, was faintly suggestive of a tombstone with the Speaker in the position where *Hic jacet* is generally found. The main point in considering a perfect room to speak in is, according to this eminent authority, "to quench the echoes."

In the interval between the adjournment of the Select Committee in 1867 and its reappointment in 1868 Mr. E. M. Barry, son of the architect of the present Houses of Parliament, had completed the plan of a new building. It is so ingenious and in all respects so happily conceived that, if at near or distant date it should be resolved to build a new House for the Commons, it will undoubtedly be adopted. I have before me Mr. Barry's plans and a copy of his description

of their effect which make it possible to realise his general idea.

A serious objection to undertaking the work of rebuilding the House rested on the assumption that it would be necessary to pull down the old building, erecting another on its site. That, as followed on the construction of the old Houses of Parliament in 1834, would necessitate the erection of a temporary building in which, for a period that could scarcely be less than two Sessions, legislative business might be carried on. Mr. Barry overcame this difficulty by an ingenious device. Adjoining the House of Commons is a court-yard that serves no indispensable purpose. He proposed to utilise it as the site of the new House which might serve ordinary purposes till the new building was completed. That done, the old building would not be discarded. The glass ceiling removed, and the hidden beauties of the roof restored to the light of day, it would serve as a lobby, giving access to the new House reserved exclusively for the use of Members. It would contain the Post Office, rooms for the Whips, and another for a refreshment bar in lieu of the stall which at that period disfigured the lobby of the House of Commons.

The new House, thus buttressed, would seat 569 Members, benches for 419 being set on the floor. Room would be provided for 330 strangers, making a total of 900 less one, an increase slightly exceeding 200. Provision of 20 inches per Member is made in this estimate, but Mr. Barry sanguinely anticipated that on crowded nights it would be possible to seat 600 Members. At the Bar end of the House seats would be provided for forty-four peers. At the opposite end, behind the Speaker's Chair, eight seats would be allotted

for the convenience of Permanent Secretaries and the like, having occasion to be in attendance at sittings with which their department was specially concerned. This would be an obvious improvement upon the present arrangement that seats officials under the gallery at the remote end of the House, necessitating a far excursion for Ministers desirous at a pinch of conferring with their official colleagues.

In the controversy as to whether the iron grating forming the floor of the present House was hurtful to the acoustical qualities of the Chamber, Mr. Barry, in opposition to Dr. Percy, the Engineer of the House, took the affirmative side. He insisted that this contrivance added one-fifth to the area of the Chamber, increasing by so much the difficulty of Members in making their voices carry to the furthest limit of the Chamber. Mr. Barry accordingly proposed to abolish the grating, making the floor of solid wood. Fresh air would be introduced from below as hitherto, but it would be conveyed through the double framing of the backs of the benches. Apart from the legislative Chamber, spacious reading and news rooms were provided and a new refreshment room on a large scale planned.

The Press Gallery was to be extended by three writing-out rooms, a refreshment room, and a hat and cloak room. In form the new House would be a square with the corners cut off, forming an octagon with four long and four short sides. The cost Mr. Barry estimated at, taking it roughly, about £100,000.

The Committee reported emphatically in favour of this scheme. They unanimously resolved that an increase of accommodation for Members could be obtained in the most satisfactory manner and without involving any interruption of the proceedings of the House by the

erection of a new Chamber in the Commons court. They especially applauded the condition that the present House would neither be pulled down nor injured. On the contrary it would be restored to the more beautiful shape it possessed according to the design of Sir Charles Barry and before, in 1860, it was subjected to alteration. The effect would be that the ceiling would be raised, the height of the windows greatly increased and the true architectural proportions restored.

It seemed that all remaining to be done was to obtain a necessary vote for money and set about the work. Probably, had the Parliament of which the Select Committee was a microcosm, been in early youth of vigorous manhood, this would have been done and Members of the present Parliament who find the necessity of daily manœuvring for seats would have been comfortably lodged. But in 1868 Parliament was tottering to a fall. It was dissolved in the summer of that year and with it went the baseless fabric of the vision of a new House of Commons. Once more the whirligig of time has brought round a state of things in which the accommodation of the present House is declared to be unendurable. This feeling of discontent may possibly last long enough to bring to the front as a matter of urgent public business the adoption of Mr. Barry's shelved plans. More probably, as the interest of new Members flags, and as bye-elections succeed each other, the pressure on the Ministerial side may decrease, as it has done at former epochs. Mr. Horsman used to say in his downright fashion that through an average Session there were only fifteen hours during which the House of Commons was not big enough. Like many assertions of this peremptory person, there is a touch of exaggeration in this dictum.

Pending development of the movement Members may congratulate themselves on some precious possessions that make the House of Commons as a legislative assembly preferable to any other. Its acoustic qualities are almost perfect, so is its system of ventilation. Kept cool in summer, it is snugly warm on winter nights. Whilst all the Ministers have private rooms, the convenience and comfort of unofficial Members have been cared for by constant additions and improvements. Like most human institutions it might in some respects be improved. As it stands it will serve.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LUNGS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THAT the House of Commons is the Chamber with the best acoustical properties among its compeers is indisputable. Personally, with an experience exceeding that of most Members, I hold it to be also the best ventilated. This is a controversial point governed by idiosyncrasies. It is an old story, going back to a date beyond thirty years, how John Bright and Acton Smee Ayrton, sitting side by side on the Treasury Bench during the last years of Mr. Gladstone's great Administration born in 1868, used to squabble over the temperature. While one declared it was intolerably cold, the other protested it was insufferable by reason of heat.

Dr. Percy, then in charge of the ventilating machinery, was the recipient of angry letters from both statesmen. Ayrton was at the time First Commissioner of Works, and spent an appreciable portion of a useful, strenuous life in prowling round, closing up the air openings of the Chamber. "Mr. Ayrton was very susceptible to draughts," Mr. Prim, Resident Clerk of the Works in the Ventilation Department of the Houses of Parliament, subsequently Resident Engineer, confided to the Select Committee meeting in 1892. Mr. Bright yearned for fresh air, from whatsoever quarter it came. Thus it came to pass that as they sat together watching the decadence of Gladstone's once vigorous Ministry, a coolness literally sprang up between the President of the Board of Trade and the First Commissioner of Works.

It is this difference in the temperature of statesmen and less important mortals that harries the life of those responsible for the ventilation of the House of Commons. What is one man's fresh air is another man's dangerous draught, leading to rheumatism and other direful consequences. The normal temperature of the House of Commons is, with infinite care and at considerable cost to the nation, kept at the level of 62°. That is the ideal temperature for healthy human beings. But so devotional is the care with which the priceless health and comfort of Members are watched over that varying circumstance leads to altered temperature. The thermometer is consulted every hour, the result being recorded in a book that will never be published. The inquiry is no mere slap-dash performance. Nothing is dealt with haphazard. An able-bodied man passes a useful life in perambulating the Chamber and its precincts, thermometer in hand, testing the temperature. No Member coming upon him by chance guesses his kindly errand. He may be seen flitting behind the Speaker's Chair at one end of the House, presently skirting the Chair of the Serjeant-at-Arms at the other, anxiously watching the thermometer and entering the record. Thence his parade leads him to the Division Lobbies, the retiring-rooms, the outer Lobbies, and all the places where Members congregate. His report is, hour by hour, carried to the Clerk of the Works, who, with a speed and decision unknown in Committee of Supply, deals accordingly with the ventilating apparatus.

I have mentioned the fact that the normal temperature aimed at is 62°. Having made profound study of human nature, the experts in charge of the ventilation of the House recognise that with a temperature 80° in the shade outside, members entering a chamber where it stood at 62° would feel it chilly. Accordingly, in such

exceptional circumstances, the temperature is nicely graduated, going up to 65°, or higher. The same infinite care watches over an all-night sitting. This divertissement taking place on a sultry summer night, a temperature of 62° is a luxury. With the dawn of early morning healthy animal nature grows chilly. The temperature of the Chamber is, accordingly, delicately doctored until, as far as possible, the anxious expert raises it to about the average of the blood heat of an Irish or Welsh Member.

In no other legislative assembly in the world is equal solicitude in the important matter of ventilation shown for the comfort of Members. The extreme Radical will feel some satisfaction in knowing that it is not extended to the House of Lords. The difference between the atmosphere of the two Chambers is strikingly disclosed on the rare occasions when the Lords sit late, carrying on debate in a crowded House. Ventilation is attempted by the vulgar process of opening windows. How ineffective this proves by comparison with the scientific, elaborate mechanism controlling ventilation in the House of Commons is brought home to the Member leaving his own House to sit for awhile in the gallery overlooking the Peers. The air of cities contains an average of four volumes of carbonic acid per 10,000. In an ordinary room the ventilation is regarded as satisfactory as long as the proportion of carbonic acid in the atmosphere does not exceed six volumes per 10,000. The House of Commons, with some 350 people breathing its atmosphere, rarely exceeds four volumes, equivalent to breathing the fresh air outside. This simple matter of fact is a triumphant vindication of the success of its ventilation.

Doctors are agreed on the point that supply of fresh air should reach the proportions of fifty cubic feet per

minute per head. That ideal is habitually exceeded in the House of Commons. Members who, like the oldest clubman, must grumble about something, complain that while the air is abundant it lacks freshness, inducing a feeling of lassitude. In fairness to the painstaking staff of the ventilation department it should be pointed out that this incontestable condition of constant attendance upon Parliamentary debate is due not to lack of freshness in the air supplied, but to the prodigious length of some speeches. As an incentive to a state of physical and mental lassitude, an hour's discourse from certain Members is equal to an increment of carbonic acid in the atmosphere of one volume per 10,000.

Two years ago careful experiments were carried out with desire to ascertain to what extent bacteria frequent the House. The results were curious—on the whole satisfactory. For reasons which Members familiar with its occupants may determine, the worst quarter of the House was, oddly enough, the bench immediately behind that on which His Majesty's Ministers sit. As the result of ten experiments made with infinite care, it was demonstrated that here bacteria revelled in proportion of 87 per cent., while the corresponding bench on the opposite side revealed the presence of only 65 per cent. of undesirable visitors. On the back bench on the Government side the record ran as low as 57 per cent. Compared, as was done in the Select Committee's Report, with such representative congregations of innocents as gather in the town schools of Aberdeen and Dundee, where mechanical ventilation is in use, this incursion of microbes in the Ministerial stronghold is exceptionally high. The organisms were different in form. Happily, in no case was discovery made of the presence of any recognised as the cause of specific infectious diseases in man.

The unique privileges of Members of the House of Commons in respect of ventilation are secured by elaborate and costly machinery. When, after the destruction of the Houses of Parliament by fire in 1834, the structure was rebuilt, special attention was devoted to the subject. Dr. Reid, the highest authority of the day, was entrusted with the care of this department. The process adopted by him was primarily based on the use of gigantic fans, which drove fresh air into the Chamber. While the supply of fresh air was an article of faith, the presence of a constant draught was a matter of fact. In this initial stage the main principle underlying the ventilation of the Chamber of to-day was adopted. Air was driven into the Chamber through the grating of the floor. Members, ever complaining, protested, with some reason, that while by this primitive process they were chilled in winter and scorched in summer, such air as was provided was served up strongly impregnated with pounded grit and road metal. A tradition lingers round this epoch, showing how a long-suffering Member secretly provided himself with a piece of paper freshly gummed. This, in the presence of sympathetic witnesses, he attached to one of the seats. On examination at the close of the sitting the paper was found to be covered with particles of fine dust projected by the ventilating apparatus. This was conclusive. Dr. Reid and his system disappeared from Westminster.

After brief interval he was succeeded by Sir Goldsworthy Gurney, who, doing away with the primitive fans, adapted the principle familiar in collieries of a furnace at the base of an upcast. Dr. Percy, following Sir Goldsworthy in care of the ventilating apparatus, maintained this principle, and with one or two improvements it is in practice at this day.

The machinery is subterraneous. There are many

more vaults betwixt the foundations of Westminster Palace and the floor of the House of Commons than is dreamt of in the philosophy of honourable Members. Under the Octagon Hall lurks a vault whence the supply of air for the debating Chamber is drawn. Through doors and windows overlooking the river the balmy breeze of the Thames is indrawn.

This arrangement is accountable for an episode, threatening at the outset, farcical in the conclusion, that marked the reign of Mr. David Plunket (now Lord Rathmore) at the Board of Works. One sultry summer night, the House being exceptionally crowded in anticipation of a division, his private room was stormed by a mob of alarmed and angry Members. Even as the door opened to admit them the First Commissioner was conscious of a pestilential smell. This evidence confirmed their complaint that the corridors, the reading-room, the dining-room, and, to a modified extent, the lobby were permeated by malodour. The conclusion was obvious. Something had gone wrong with the drains, and the health of honourable and right honourable Members was in dire peril.

Mr. Plunket hastily summoned to consultation the chief engineers and the heads of his staff. Hurried examination was made of the sanitary apparatus, without detecting a flaw. Even as the anxious work went forward the plague abated. The normal condition of the sedulously purified atmosphere was steadily, with increased rapidity, reasserting itself. The harried First Commissioner, going on to the Terrace with intent to cool his heated brow, came upon the heart of the mystery. Just passing the end of the Terrace, slowly making its way with the tide up the river, was a stately barge, with high deckload of fresh manure meant for riverside gardens. Drifting at slow pace past the Terrace of the

House of Commons, the evening breeze, blowing off the heap, filled the ventilating bins with delectable air. Hence the scare.

The progress of the indraught is intercepted by a broad expanse of falling water, through which the air must needs pass, leaving behind it possible particles of undesirable dust. Inside the chamber are a couple of shafts worked by a large pair of wheels, which drive the air into what looks like a colossal corn bin. This is a chamber eight feet high extending the full breadth of the vault, a distance of thirteen feet. Inside this bin is a movable close-fitting shutter, which travels backwards and forwards. As it is pushed forward the air in the bin, having no other means of escape, passes upward through a funnel into another chamber prepared for its reception. The closely-fitting shutter advancing leaves a vacuum behind, into which the outer air comes rushing, in time to find itself driven upwards by return of the relentless shutter.

Thus through the long night, while tongues wag above, the almost silent shutter moves backward and forward, crushing the newly-come air out of the bin, only to find that a fresh supply has entered on the other side, making constant discovery that if the bin is to be emptied there is yet another journey to make.

The air thus dexterously trapped breathes itself out from the upper bin into a gallery, along which it courses till it finds itself under the legislative Chamber. Thirty feet above the lights of the House shine, twinkling through the close iron grating of the floor. It is so silent down there that one can distinctly hear the voice of the honourable Member addressing the Chair. Climbing a series of steep iron ladders the explorer comes upon a succession of gratings on which stand blocks of ice. Coursing round these the ambient air cools itself before

entering the House through the grating which serves as flooring, so cunningly hidden by twine matting that probably half the Members of the House are not aware of its existence.

The blocks of ice are for summer time. In wintry weather the air is comfortably heated before it enters the Chamber. When the fog lies low over London the outer air passes through layers of cotton wool six inches thick. The appearance of the cotton wool after a few hours' fog is a painful object-lesson for citizens. There was a memorable occasion when the fog prevailed unintermittedly for forty-eight hours, with the result that the cotton wool was as black as the back of a chimney. I have groped my way down to the House through a dense fog, and entering the legislative Chamber, have found it absolutely free from mist, the atmosphere in normal condition. That is the ultimate triumph of the patient, cultured care that watches over the lungs of the House of Commons.

By this elaborate process does fresh air get into the legislative Chamber in unbroken supply. How the vitiated atmosphere, occasionally tainted with strong language, escapes is a simpler process. By the marge of the ceiling are panels opening upon a space left between it and the roof. The air, rarified by use, ascends as the sparks fly upward, escapes by these open panels, is conducted by flues to the basement, and delivered in a gallery ending in a shaft opening up in the Clock Tower, a height of 230 feet. On the basement a great fire brightly burns on open hearth. Drawing to it the inrushing air, it drives it up the shaft and so into the infinitude of spacious London.

CHAPTER XIII.

BULLS IN THE WESTMINSTER CHINA SHOP.

DURING a prolonged opportunity, extending over thirty-five years, I have varied more severe study of Parliamentary life by taking note of those verbal lapses, known by the generic term of bull. There is something about the atmosphere of the House of Commons that insensibly but irresistibly causes the oratorical foot to stumble. Few men, after whatsoever prolonged acquaintance with the place, overcome a certain feeling threatening paralysis when they find themselves on their legs addressing the Speaker. In his "Life of Gladstone" Mr. Morley tells how that heaven-born orator, most fluent of men, in his early Parliamentary days always offered up a silent prayer before he rose to address the House. That is not a custom convenient for general adoption. The preceding orator might have resumed his seat whilst the prayer was in progress, and, if the Speaker's eye was to be caught, the Amen must be postponed or indecently hurried.

Mr. Morley's own maiden speech, delivered in the Session of 1884, was, as I have mentioned, painful to his friends by reason of the extreme embarrassment of its delivery. They saw the newcomer, sustained by high reputation gained in other fields outside the House, full of well digested information, with trained intellect, and acute mind, struggling piteously with parched tongue, nervously facing an audience in which

there were not a dozen men intellectually his equal. The oddest token of nervousness on rising to address the House that has come under my personal observation was the late Mr. Whalley, long time Member for Peterborough. When he rose to speak he furtively rapped the back of the bench before him with his knuckles.

The progress of the General Election of January, 1906, supplied pleasing promise of new hands in the bull stock-yard. A Liberal candidate in one of the Yorkshire divisions sought to secure the Labour vote by uncompromising declaration that "the law relating to Labour combinations must be made watertight, so that no judge can drive his coach and four through it." That is at least as good as the late Mr. Hopwood's appeal to the House in discussion in Committee on the question of compulsory vaccination. "Don't," he implored Members, "drive the steam engine of the law over people's consciences."

Captain Craig, addressing the Eastdown electors at Lisburne, said, "The naked sword is drawn for the fight and, gentlemen, never again will the black smoke of Nationalists tar barrels drift on the Home Rule wind to darken the hearts of Englishmen." Mr. Shard, the Unionist candidate for Walthamstow, asked what religion he professed, was at pains to give particulars. "My great grandfather," he said, "was baptised in the Church of England, married in the Church of England, and buried in a Church of England graveyard. And so was I."

An Ulster delegate visiting Scotland in the interests of a Unionist candidate could not conceal his distrust of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Home Rule tendencies. "Whenever the Prime Minister mentions Home Rule," he said, "he puts his foot in it up to the knee." This recalls a bull of contemporary date trotted

out by a reverend gentleman. Defending the attitude and manner of the Episcopal Bench he said, "Bishops are not really so stiff and starchy as some people make them out to be. There is a good heart beating below their gaiters."

Whilst candidates for Parliamentary honours did pretty well in the course of the electioneering campaign, old stagers maintained the reputation of the House of Commons. Sir George Bartley, endeavouring to minimise the excessive expenditure of the Unionist Government, assured his old constituents that "the spirit of the age will have to put its hand in its trousers pocket." "We managed by a short head, gentlemen, to dam the flowing tide," said Mr. Stanley Wilson, making the best of the small Unionist majority that gave him a seat at Holderness.

Sir Robert Purvis, fortuitously knighted in the last weeks of the existence of a Government he had faithfully served (more especially at 9 o'clock in the evening when it is desirable to postpone approach to public business), takes the cake in respect of sustained brilliancy of metaphor. Addressing his old constituents at Peterborough in defence of an Act of Parliament under whose operation some of them had gone to prison for a week as Passive Resisters he said, "That, gentlemen, is the marrow of the Education Act, and it will not be taken out by Dr. Clifford or anybody else. It is founded on a granite foundation and it speaks in a voice not to be drowned by sectarian clamour." We must go to Germany to beat that. In an address to the present Emperor's father a Rheinlander Mayor said, "'No Austria, no Prussia, one only Germany.' Such were the words the mouth of your Imperial Majesty has always had in its eye."

Sir E. Durning-Lawrence did not succeed in holding

his seat at Truro, which is a pity if there were hope of his having up his sleeve (the habit of mixed metaphors is contagious) anything so good as his last utterance in the House of Commons. It was towards the end of the Session of 1905. One of the occasions referred to in the case of Sir Robert Purvis suddenly presented itself and it became necessary that some faithful Ministerialists should keep on talking till loiterers, dropping in from dinner, avoided the danger of a snap division. Sir Edward waddled along for a full hour, once lighting up the dreary, vapid flood by flashing on his impatient audience the question, "Is this Government to be put into the melting pot that we may see who is to take hold of the handle of the ship of State?"

In similarly lofty spirit during debate on the Eastern Question the late Mr. Alderman Cotton, ex-Lord Mayor of London, finally Remembrancer, warned a hushed House that "the state of negotiations is so critical it only requires a spark to let slip the dogs of war."

Mr. William Shaw, Leader of the Nationalist Party in the House of Commons whom Parnell dispossessed, addressing a meeting gathered on a Sunday to demonstrate against the Land Act said, "They tell us we violate the Sabbath by being here to-day. Yet if the ox or the ass falls into a pit on a Sunday we may take him out. Our brother is in the pit to-day—the farmer and the landlord are both in it—and we are come here to-day to try if we can lift them out." Which was the ox and which the ass Mr. Shaw refrained from determining.

Mr. A. M. Sullivan, "the eloquent Member for Louth," as Gladstone once called him, had a story about an Irish barrister he used to tell with keen relish. "Gentlemen of the Jury," the learned gentleman said

with a tremor of genuine emotion in his voice, "it will be for you to say whether this defendant shall be allowed to come into court with unblushing footsteps, with the cloak of hypocrisy in his mouth, and draw three bullocks out of my client's pocket with impunity."

The nearest parallel I know to this is in the written word where bulls are less frequently found. Criticising Linau's Lyrics Professor Johannes Scherr writes: "Out of the dark region of philosophical problems the poet suddenly lets swarms of song dive up, carrying far-flashing pearls of thought in their beaks." It was Mr. O'Connor Power, one of the most eloquent of the Irish Nationalists mustered under Parnell's command, who avowed the conclusion that "since the Government have let the cat out of the bag there is nothing to be done but to take the bull by the horns."

Mr. Spurgeon was a keen collector of mixed metaphors, finding a rich field in the correspondence that daily overwhelmed him. I made a note of two or three he delightedly communicated to a kindred connoisseur. A lady enclosing a small contribution for his schools wrote, "I hope this widow's mite may take root and spread its branches until it becomes a Hercules in your hands." The pulpit utterances of ambitious probationers added something to the great preacher's store. One "prayed that God's rod and staff may be ours while tossed on the sea of life so that we may fight the good fight of faith and in the end soar to rest." "We thank Thee for this spark of grace; water it Lord," was the sententious, almost imperious entreaty of another promising young man. Still another prayed, "Gird up the loins of our minds that we may receive the latter rain." "As if we were barrels whose hoops were loose," was Mr. Spurgeon's laughing comment.

I happened upon rare occasion to be present at a half-

yearly meeting of an industrial company. Notice was given by a dissatisfied shareholder of an amendment challenging the policy of the Board. The Chairman met the attack in advance, defending the action of himself and his colleagues and hinting that the objector was no better than he should be. A loyal shareholder following said, "A gentleman has attempted to throw a bomb-shell at the Board. But the Chairman has knocked it into a cocked hat long before it was brought forward."

It was in course of enquiry into an alleged case of sending diseased meat to Smithfield Market that a veterinary surgeon testified to many cases coming under his knowledge where the cattle were "slaughtered in order to save their lives." During the contest at Stroud at the General Election of 1906 the Unionist candidate addressing a packed meeting said, "If you give these people (the Liberals) rope enough, they will certainly hang themselves, and after they have done that it will be our turn." Even this did not win the seat for him. The latest House of Commons bull I remember was born in the first Session of the new Parliament. The credit of it belongs to Mr. Charles Craig, not the Captain already quoted but another Irish Member representing South Antrim. The question before the House was the second reading of the Irish Labourers Bill. "If this Bill passes," said Mr. Craig, the spirit of prophecy upon him adding solemnity to his voice, "I see before the Irish labourers a future from which they have been for too many years past kept out."

Mr. MacNeill's passion for supplementary questions led him in the last Session of the Balfourian Parliament into a delightful quandary. Having addressed to the Attorney-General for Ireland a question duly appearing on the Paper and receiving what as usual he regarded as an evasive reply, he rose and impartially wagging his

forefinger at the Speaker and the Minister said, "I will now put to the Attorney-General another question, which distinctly arises, Mr. Speaker, out of the answer the right honourable gentleman has not given."

After all nothing can beat Sir William Hart-Dyke's lapse into mixed metaphor, an experience the House of Commons delighted in the more by reason of the ex-Vice-President of the Council's habitual gravity of manner. On the penultimate occasion when the Right Honourable "Jemmy" Lowther called attention to the futility of the Sessional Order which prohibits peers from taking part in Parliamentary elections, he instanced cases where it had been openly flouted. Amongst others he cited that of Lord Halsbury, at the time Lord High Chancellor, who had delivered a speech in favour of a Ministerial candidate on the very eve of the election. This made a considerable impression on the House. If these things were done in the green tree as represented by the head of the law, the fount of justice, what would be done in the dry, whose branches were typified by titled landlords accustomed to dictate to their tenants. Sir William Hart-Dyke, rising to oppose the motion for repealing the Sessional Order, said he shared the pained surprise created by this disclosure. "The right honourable gentleman," he said, turning to regard "Jemmy" in the familiar corner seat below the Gangway, now alas! vacated, "has certainly gone to the top of the tree and has caught a very large fish."

The picture here suggested, of Jemmy Lowther, fishing rod in hand, climbing to the top of a stately oak or ash, and there hooking the bulky Lord Chancellor, evoked a prolonged burst of laughter that momentarily disconcerted Hart-Dyke, obviously unconscious of the joke.

That is hard to beat. But as becomes a literary

stylist, historian of the Roman Empire, author of other classics, Mr. Bryce approaches very near it. In the closing days of the first Session of the new Parliament, the House being in Committee on the Irish Vote, the Nationalists in the course of discussion made a dead set against the Irish Local Government Board. "Oh, yes," said the Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, "the Irish Local Government Board is a malignant fairy which steps in off its own bat."

The outburst of sarcasm taking this turn was recognised by a delighted House as, in the circumstances, appropriately *sui generis*.

In the spring of 1902, in debate on the Coal Mines (Employment) Bill, the esteemed Welsh Member known by his Druidical title "Mabon" accused Sir Thomas Wrightson of having made a certain statement.

Sir Thomas Wrightson: "I didn't say so."

Mabon: "Oh, he didn't say so. Very well. If he will withdraw it, I am satisfied."

The House felt nothing could be handsomer than that.

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